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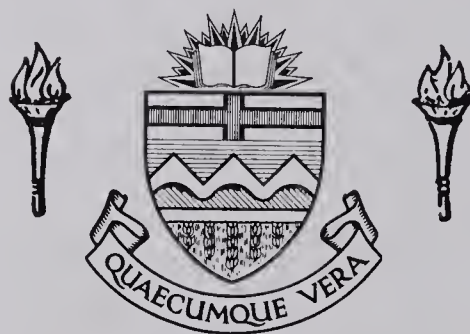
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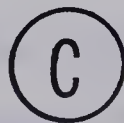


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REGENERATION IN THE WORKS OF T. S. ELIOT

by



ELSIE B. HOLMES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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OF MASTER OF ARTS

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Regeneration in the Works of T. S. Eliot submitted by Elsie B. Holmes in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.





"O light, O glory of human kind, what water is this that here pours forth from one source, and self from self doth wend away?"

At such prayer was said to me: "Pray Matilda that she tell it thee"; and here made answer, as he doth who frees him from blame,

the fair Lady: "This and other things have been told him by me, and sure am I that Lethe's water hid them not from him."

And Beatrice: "Haply a greater care that oft bereaves of memory hath dimmed his mind's eyes.

But behold Eunoe, which there flows on; lead him to it, and as thou art wont, requicken his fainting virtue."

. . . . .  
If, reader, I had greater space for writing, I would sing, at least in part, of the sweet draught which never would have sated me;

but forasmuch as all the pages ordained for this second cantic are filled, the curb of art no further lets me go.

I came back from the most holy waves, born again, even as new trees renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to mount to the stars.

Dante, Purgatorio, Canto XXXIII.



## ABSTRACT

T. S. Eliot's famous declaration that he was a royalist in politics, a classicist in literature, and an Anglo-Catholic in religion is often quoted as a classification of his life and thought. While any attempt to rigidly categorize an author's ideas is unfortunate, yet this statement does indicate the general areas to which Eliot was committed. And in discussing the theme of regeneration in his works, I have in mind this commitment to the Anglo-Catholic Church.

As an introduction to my survey of the poetry and plays, I will refer to explicit statements by Eliot in articles, letters, and critical essays that indicate his personal convictions about the rootlessness of man in modern society and his consequent need of spiritual renewal. There is abundant evidence in Eliot's prose that as far as he personally was concerned, such renewal must come through the Christian faith. Yet he was not a bigot, and wrote freely of the value to society of any religion. I will discuss briefly, therefore, his major non-Christian sources, and indicate the value to his art of such a juxtaposition of Christian and non-Christian ideas.

Of utmost importance in the study of any philosophical theme in literature is the author's own theory about the relationship between art and belief. While Eliot's viewpoint changed gradually throughout his career, his final position is that there is a definite relationship between a writer's personal beliefs and his art; it is reasonable, therefore, and instructive, to examine his works from the Christian point of view.





The early poems suggest regeneration in an implicit and largely negative manner through exhibiting a vivid picture of individuals for whom life is meaningless. Yet in each of these poems, through allusion and symbol, Eliot indicates that there is hope of redemption from a death-in-life existence. While this theme is continued in the later poems, regeneration in its positive form constitutes the main emphasis after Eliot's formal commitment to the Christian religion.

A keen awareness of both the need of man and the remedy is revealed in Eliot's drama. In The Rock there is a generalized picture of man's condition and the role of the Church in meeting his need, whereas in Murder in the Cathedral the women and priests are transformed through Becket's death which represents not only the passion of Christ, but a moment when Time and Eternity meet. In the four plays with a modern setting, Eliot depicts characters who suffer from an acute sense of isolation, recognize their need, and accept a remedy. While religious terms are generally avoided in these plays, the marked change effected in Harry, Edward and Lavinia, Celia, Colby Simpkins and Lord Claverton is clearly analogous to the Christian experience of regeneration.

While Eliot's personal religious viewpoint does, I believe, provide a rationale for conducting this study from the Christian standpoint, I recognize that personal belief and poetic belief may differ. Yet in examining his major works I find no contradiction between the artistic presentation of the regeneration concept and his own expressed opinions concerning the role of the Church in the modern world.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: ELIOT'S RELIGIOUS AND ARTISTIC BELIEFS

Most critics of T. S. Eliot's work refer to his religion, but with varying interpretations as to its importance in his life and work. Cleanth Brooks says, for example, that "Few literary men in our history have so consistently related all their activities to a coherent set of principles. . . . In a time of disorder, Eliot moved toward a restoration of order."<sup>1</sup> And this "restoration of order" is, in Eliot's art, integrally related to the Christian religion. The phrase suggests, furthermore, the concept of regeneration which is a major unifying theme in Eliot's poetry and plays, and it is my intention to discuss his portrayal of this theme primarily from a Christian viewpoint. Before such a study can be meaningful, however, it is necessary to note the author's personal convictions concerning the meaning of regeneration and its relevance to modern life. This first chapter, therefore, deals primarily with Eliot's prose: letters, articles and essays, and will establish a basis for the examination of the poetry and plays.

Several theological terms will be used frequently in this paper, and since T. S. Eliot was, after 1927, a member of the Anglo-Catholic Church, I will define these according to the particular emphases of this group. Anglo-Catholicism began with the Oxford Movement in the mid-nineteenth century, and according to the New Catholic Encyclopedia (Volume I) the term "Anglo-Catholic" covers two related movements: the revival of Catholic dogmatic and sacramental tenets, and the Ritualist Movement, which was the outgrowth of Tractarianism. The Anglo-Catholics firmly upheld the principle of apostolic succession and thus protested





against the protestantizing of the Church of England, and the trend within that church toward liberal theology.

The term regeneration means "new birth," or rebirth from what may be regarded as a state of death. In the orthodox Christian sense, it means the new life effected in the soul of the individual who has exercised faith in Christ and joined the Church, the visible Body of Christ, through baptism and confirmation. Regeneration is effected through the sacrament of baptism, yet the development of this "new life" is a process requiring the grace that is imparted through Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Penance. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church states that the "Thirty Nine Articles . . . regard Baptism as a 'sign of Regeneration' by which 'the promises of forgiveness of sin and of our adoption to be the Sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed'." The Council of Trent, however, stressed that Baptism is "not merely a sign of grace, but actually contains and confers it on those who put no obstacle in its way."<sup>2</sup> The latter is the view of the Anglo-Catholic Church.

The idea of redemption is common to many religions and is "based on the desire of man to be delivered from sin, suffering and death." Christianity, however, "claims that in it alone has it become a fact through the Incarnation and the death of Christ. It is viewed by theologians under the double aspect of deliverance from sin and restoration of man and the world to communion with God."<sup>3</sup> The Incarnation, furthermore, must be understood as a unique event in history in which "the eternal Son of God took human flesh from his human mother and that the historical Christ is at once fully God and fully man." In contrast to other religions, which believe in "a mere



theophany" or perhaps a "transitory appearance of God in human form," Christianity asserts "an abiding union in the Person of Christ of Godhead and Manhood without the integrity or permanence of either being impaired. It also assigns the beginnings of this union to a definite and known date in human history."<sup>4</sup>

The Anglo-Catholic insistence on the validity of the apostolic succession, and the visible Church as the Body of Christ, means that to them the Church, as Newman said in 1829, has ever been "the chief (almost the sole) instrument of the world's regeneration, the foundation on which what the apostle calls 'the general assembly' of Christians has been built." Newman goes on to say that the ministerial order is the "guardian and channel" of the spiritual privileges, for these "are derived to the multitude through the sacraments alone," and these "are administered by the ministerial order." The publication in which these statements are found proclaims the doctrine of the visible Church as the instrument through which redemption comes, because through it the Sacraments are conveyed. Newman says also that to come into the Church means that a "wonderful change" is wrought in the soul, for through the entrance of the Spirit it is regenerated and becomes the temple of the Spirit. The Church, furthermore, may be viewed as an extension of the Incarnation because its function is "to impart life" and its power lies in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The same thought is emphasized by a contemporary Catholic theologian, E. Schillebeeckx. In Christ the Sacrament, he states:

For the sacraments are indeed a divinization which takes the form of restoration and redemption; they are the grace of vita ex morte, life out of death, after the pattern of the sacrifice of life on the Cross brought to glory in the Resurrection. Of their nature the sacraments place us in the situation of, and make ours the destiny of, the







humiliated and exalted Christ, and draw us in him into the divine life . . . . Thus sacramental life gives birth to the new, integrated man; the Christian with his Christlike integrity.<sup>7</sup>

These explanations aid, I believe, in an understanding of Eliot's direct references and allusions to Christian doctrine, and especially his frequent indication of the importance of the visible Church and its ministries as the agency of God's grace. This is seen, for example, in "Little Gidding," when Eliot says the "hints and guesses" man receives of reality from an occasional "moment in and out of time" must be followed by "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action." Only then does one come to realize that the "hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation."

Although I propose to examine the concept of regeneration in Eliot's works primarily as a central Christian doctrine in which he believed, I do not suggest, by so doing, that an interpretation based on non-Christian ideas about a regeneration experience is invalid; nor do I imply that Eliot regarded his art as propaganda. Yet the death-rebirth theme is a persistent one from his earliest poetry to his final play, and the fact that he is, in articles, letters, interviews, and essays, outspoken about his own Christian convictions, indicates that a Christian orientation in his art is to be expected.

In examining Eliot's prose as a basis for the study of the poetry and plays, I will refer first of all to some of his statements concerning the need of modern man, and then to what he suggests as the answer to this need. In this discussion, I will indicate various individuals whose ideas influenced Eliot's thinking in his formative years. Next I will discuss Eliot's frequent use of ideas from folklore and oriental religions, and suggest his reason for so doing. Finally, this chapter



will deal with the relationship of art and belief, with particular stress on Eliot's personal position in this matter.

Because of Eliot's preoccupation with man's need, Allan Tate calls him "the uncommon man committed to the common reality of the human condition."<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Raine says that although Eliot has shown us a "vision of the hell that lies about us" there is in such a statement a "kind of healing power," for Eliot, in stating the worst, "has always implied the whole extent of the reality of which that worst is only one part." For her, the early poems mean more than the later, because "Mr. Eliot's vision of hell restored a necessary dimension to our universe."<sup>9</sup> Certainly in Eliot's prose we note a concern for the spiritual condition of modern man that to a great extent parallels the artistic expression of the same theme in his poetry and plays. The prose, of course, does not portray the type of metaphysical exploration evident in the poetry, yet the general attitude to life's problems is similar. For example, in writing of Matthew Arnold in The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism, Eliot said that though it is an advantage to mankind in general to live in a beautiful world, for the poet this is not important. Rather, "the essential advantage for a poet is not to have a beautiful world with which to deal: it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory."<sup>10</sup> And the "horror," to Eliot, is primarily the complacency of "the hollow men"; to be a "lost violent soul" is preferable. This point is expressed in After Strange Gods where Eliot writes of the people who inhabit the hell of Ezra Pound's Cantos. These individuals are unreal, lacking both dignity and tragedy, because they make no





individual struggle: "If you do not distinguish between individual responsibility and circumstances in Hell, between essential Evil and social accidents, then the Heaven (if any) implied will be equally trivial and accidental. Mr. Pound's Hell, for all its horrors, is a perfectly comfortable one for the modern mind to contemplate, and disturbing to no one's complacency: It is a Hell for the other people, the people we read about in the newspapers, not for oneself and one's friends."<sup>11</sup>

Eliot believed firmly in the doctrine of original sin. In After Strange Gods, he writes of the "intrusion of the diabolic into modern literature" and the fact that Evil can "operate through men of genius of the most excellent character," commenting, however, that what he is saying cannot mean much "to anyone for whom the doctrine of Original Sin is not a very real and tremendous thing."<sup>12</sup> This belief stems not primarily from Eliot's New England upbringing, as F. O. Matthiessen indicates, for his early environment was not a strictly Puritan one, but results rather from the gradual development of his philosophical interests into the center of traditional Christian dogma. It is necessary to keep in mind in this connection that the doctrine of original sin is not a doctrine of total depravity, which Calvin proposed, for the latter implies a total erasing of the image of God in man. This is not Eliot's belief, or that of his Church.

Eliot's convictions about the nature of man and his need for renewal were not simply "accepted" when he joined the Anglo-Catholic Church, for they are evident in his art prior to that time. In fact, it is this negative aspect of the regeneration concept that is most



apparent in the poetry written prior to 1927. Thus before considering Eliot's explicit statements about the Christian answer to man's condition, I will note briefly several individuals whose ideas influenced Eliot in his youth in the forming of his philosophical and religious position. His association with Irving Babbitt, for example, during his Harvard days, was of lasting value. Years later Eliot spoke of him as "a man who directed my interests, at a particular moment, in such a way that the marks of that direction are still evident," even though their views by that time were extremely different.<sup>13</sup> Babbitt was a determined humanist, and deeply interested in Buddhism, and while both views interested Eliot he ultimately found them incompatible with his Christian convictions. The association did, however, foster Eliot's sense of tradition, and help him understand "the continuity of cultural development."<sup>14</sup>

F. H. Bradley, the philosopher whose ideas formed the subject of Eliot's doctoral dissertation, influenced Eliot both in his literary style and his philosophy. In the preface to his published dissertation, Eliot acknowledges "how closely my own prose style was formed on that of Bradley and how little it has changed in all these years."<sup>15</sup> In the first chapter of Appearance and Reality Bradley writes that "Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct." He felt that metaphysical systems were like great works of art in the sense that they were the expressions of a sensibility that tried to impose some order on experience. In a sense Bradley may be called a mystic,





though not a metaphysician, because he did not believe reality can be described in discursive terms.<sup>16</sup> This book represents Bradley's effort to prove that all knowledge is merely illusion and appearance, though even appearance exists in some sense, and must therefore form part of Reality. It needs only to be completed in a transcendent pattern to become fully real. Bradley does not believe in individual immortality, but regards immortality as a passing phase of the final Reality, and during this life of Appearance, each person is isolated in his own mind.<sup>17</sup> This idea that every soul is "insulated" from every other reinforces the romantic idea of isolation, and seems to have deeply impressed Eliot, as did the view of the personality as "a mere cluster of imperfections and delusions."<sup>18</sup> In general, Bradley's philosophy seems to be applicable to either religious faith or skepticism because Truth, for both, is a matter of seeing in human history and experience a pattern of significance, and of "timeless moments which carry their own and reinforce each other's validity."<sup>19</sup>

It was in the works of Baudelaire that Eliot studied the Christian meaning which is beneath the appearances of the real, and it is possible to trace a great many similarities in the poetry of the two. Each speaks of "the aridity of contemporary life, . . . the same aspiration toward purity, the same search for humility."<sup>20</sup> In his essay on Baudelaire, Eliot calls him essentially Christian because of the exploratory nature of his work, and because of the fact that though he did not practise Christianity, he did "assert its necessity." He was Christian, that is, because he recognized the



importance of sin and redemption: "the possibility of damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation - of salvation from the ennui of modern life, because it at least gives some significance to living." Eliot's view of human nature, as cited, reflects Baudelaire's preoccupation, and indicates the same contempt for the indecisive, uncommitted individual: "So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human, and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least, we exist. It is true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned. Baudelaire was man enough for damnation".<sup>21</sup>

Though he never met T. E. Hulme, Eliot's personal philosophy, particularly concerning the nature of man, was greatly influenced by his views. Hulme in some respects was like Irving Babbitt, a disciplinarian and a classicist, and a believer in dogma. But he did not trust humanism. In his Speculations, Hulme contrasts what he terms the Religious Attitude and the Humanist Attitude, and emphasizes the importance of recognizing the dogma of Original Sin in talking about the nature of man. He states that "man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection. It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma. Very few since the Renaissance have really understood the dogma, certainly very few inside the Churches of





recent years."<sup>22</sup> Eliot believed, as did Hulme, and unlike the Puritans, that although men cannot be perfect, they can "occasionally accomplish acts that partake of perfection."<sup>23</sup> Yet this belief in no way lessened his awareness of man's spiritual need, as indicated by his persistent preoccupation with this theme.

Not only is the matter of man's nature, and his evident spiritual sterility, stressed in Eliot's prose, but his belief in a specific remedy is clearly stated as well. Although he was influenced deeply by Irving Babbitt's humanism and by Bradley's Idealism, Eliot came to regard these philosophies as incomplete and insufficient to effect man's spiritual renewal. In 1928, in his essay, "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," Eliot refutes Babbitt's contention that humanism is the alternative to religion on the grounds that the two are not, historically speaking, parallel: "Humanism has been sporadic, but Christianity continuous. It is quite irrelevant to conjecture the possible development of the European races without Christianity - to imagine, that is, a tradition of humanism equivalent to the actual tradition of Christianity."<sup>24</sup> Eliot insists that he has rejected nothing positive in Babbitt's teaching, but has simply recognized the weak points, and demonstrated that religion and humanism cannot be separated. In "Second Thoughts About Humanism" (1929), Eliot reiterates this thought, and suggests further that a pure humanistic attitude is not opposed to religion, but the two are necessary to each other. He indicates that the views of T. E. Hulme are the true humanism, for Hulme found out that "there is an absolute to which Man can never attain."<sup>25</sup>





In 1937, in "Revelation," Eliot refers again to Babbitt, who turned to Primitive Buddhism rather than Christianity. Eliot claims Babbitt's writings show "a steady, unconscious desire to evade Christian conclusions at any cost, even at the cost of what may seem to others than the author rather important features of Buddhism." Furthermore, Babbitt's idea of Christianity, according to Eliot, is that of "the decayed forms of religiosity that he had seen about him," rather than with "a faith men had been professing to live by during nearly two thousand years. . . . He is comparing not Buddha and Christ, or Buddhism and Christianity, but Buddha and Christianity."<sup>26</sup>

It was Eliot's conversion to Christianity in 1927 that caused this break with the humanistic tradition, for he began to see everything in the light of Christianity. Frequent statements in letters and articles attest not only to his personal religious commitment, but to his belief in the Christian message as the remedy for man's need. In 1932, for example, he wrote the following letter to Sister Mary James Power in reply to an enquiry concerning his religious position:

Dear Sister,

In reply to your letter of December 1st, perhaps the simplest account that I can give is to say that I was brought up as a Unitarian of the New England variety; that for many years I was without any definite religious faith, or without any at all; that in 1927 I was baptized and confirmed into the Church of England; and that I am associated with what is called the Catholic movement in that Church as represented by Viscount Halifax and the English Church Union. I accordingly believe in the Creeds, the invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, the Sacrament of Penance, etc.

Yours faithfully,

T. S. Eliot



In 1934 Eliot published in The Spectator his answer to "What Does the Church Stand For?" In this article he says that "there must be a profound difference not only between the theories . . . but between the whole process of life, of those who believe in Christian revelation of the supernatural order and those who do not. Both classes of people may underestimate the difference." He goes on to say that it is not necessary, and not rational, to justify the existence of the Church in the eyes of the world, any more than it is rational to justify to outsiders the laws of physics. He explains this as follows:

The thoughts, words and deeds of individual ecclesiastics may from time to time require a good deal of justification, or even regret; the ecclesiastical organization and administration may be criticized; the quality and qualifications of men taking orders may be criticized; the quality and subject-matter of sermons do actually come in for severe criticism which is often deserved. And obviously, the quality of spiritual direction given to individual penitents will vary a great deal. But so long as the Sacraments are provided for the benefit of men, and the services for the glory of God, the Church is doing what is its essential business.<sup>28</sup>

In "Revelation" (1937) Eliot asserts, "I take for granted that Christian revelation is the only full revelation; and that the fullness of Christian revelation resides in the essential fact of the Incarnation, in relation to which all Christian revelation is to be understood."<sup>29</sup> He says that philosophies without revelation are characterized by instability, frequent recurrence, and the tendency to evoke an opposite view. Yet they usually lead to immediate results, and because of this it is easy to convince people that such philosophies are more promising than Christianity. He concludes the essay by saying that he believes "the religious sentiment - which can only be completely satisfied by the complete message of revelation - is simply suffering from a condition





of repression painful for those in whom it is repressed, who yearn for the fulfilment of belief, although too ashamed of that yearning to allow it to come to consciousness."<sup>30</sup>

In 1945, in an interview in which Eliot was asked, "How would you, out of the bitter experience of the present time, wish mankind to develop?", he replied:

I should speak of a greater spiritual consciousness, which is not asking that everybody should rise to the same conscious level, but that everybody should have some awareness of the depths of spiritual development and some appreciation and respect for those more exceptional people who can proceed further in spiritual knowledge than most of us can.<sup>31</sup>

In 1955, in an article entitled, "The Church's Message to the World," Eliot discusses why and how the church should interfere with the world. He asserts that the Church must not only see evil, but know why it exists:

We are all dissatisfied with the way in which the world is conducted: some believe that if we trust ourselves entirely to politics, sociology, or economics we shall only shuffle from one makeshift to another. And here is the perpetual message of the Church: to affirm, to teach and to apply, true theology. We cannot be satisfied to be Christians at our devotions and merely secular reformers all the rest of the week, . . . . The Church has perpetually to answer this question: to what purpose were we born? What is the end of Man?"<sup>32</sup>

Those who knew Eliot personally occasionally refer to evidence of his personal faith. Stephen Spender, for example, in "Remembering Eliot," recounts the occasion when Virginia Woolf, one day at tea, needled Eliot about his religion. "Did he go to church? Yes. Did he hand round the plate for the collection? Yes. Oh, really! Then what did he experience when he prayed? Eliot leaned forward, bowing his head in that attitude which was itself one of prayer ('Why should





the aged eagle stretch his wings?'), and described the attempt to concentrate, to forget self, to attain union with God."<sup>33</sup>

In his essays of literary criticism as well, Eliot often commented on his religious views, or those of others, in relation to the Christian remedy for the need of man and society. "The 'Pensees' of Pascal," for example, indicates the vital influence of Pascal on Eliot's personal development as a Christian author. Because Pascal was an intellectual, Eliot saw in him the counterpart and forerunner of the modern Christian mystic.<sup>34</sup> He calls Pascal an "intelligent believer" who must proceed "by rejection and elimination." That is, he views the world in a particular way, finds it inexplicable by any non-religious theory, and among religions he finds Christianity, and Catholic Christianity, to account most satisfactorily for the world, and the moral world within. For this reason, by what Newman calls 'powerful and concurrent' reasons, he is committed to the dogma of the Incarnation. Eliot concludes his essay by saying that he knows of no Christian writer he would recommend more than Pascal "to those who doubt, but who have the mind to conceive and the sensibility to feel, the disorder, the futility, the meaninglessness, the mystery of life and suffering, and who can find peace only through a satisfaction of the whole being."<sup>35</sup>

The essays on education also indicate Eliot's convictions regarding the value of religion and specifically Christianity. In "Modern Education and the Classics" (1932), he states: "Even philosophy, when divorced from theology and from the knowledge of life and of ascertainable facts, is but a famishing pabulum, or a



draught stimulating for a moment, leaving behind drought and disillusion."<sup>36</sup>

In writing in defence of the study of classical languages, he says, "There are two and only two finally tenable hypotheses about life: the Catholic and the materialistic." And he defends the study of the classical languages because of their association with Catholicism, even as he defends the primacy of "the contemplative over the active life." Concerning education in general, he says, "As only the Catholic and the communist know, all education must be ultimately religious education." At the same time he admits the possibility that the future may bring neither a Christian nor a materialistic civilization, but rather "chaos or torpor":

In that event I am not interested in the future; I am only interested in the two alternatives which seem to me worthy of interest. I am only here concerned with readers who are prepared to prefer a Christian civilization, if a choice is forced upon them; and it is only upon readers who wish to see a Christian civilization survive and develop that I am urging the importance of the study of Latin and Greek.<sup>37</sup>

In 1961, in "To Criticize the Critic," Eliot states that his religious beliefs are unchanged, even though he might not now express his commitment to royalty, classicism and the catholic faith in quite the same way as he did in 1927.<sup>38</sup>

Critics differ considerably in their assessment of these statements in Eliot's prose, and in the importance of his Christian faith to his art. Audrey Cahill, in T. S. Eliot and the Human Predicament, says that Eliot's conversion to Christianity seems to mark "not so much a turning point in his poetry as a new dimension in his vision."<sup>39</sup> Yvor Winters, on the other hand, calls Eliot's conversion "merely nominal"





for as far as one can judge from his writings "it really meant nothing at all,"<sup>40</sup> and Stephen Spender criticizes Eliot's tendency to reject any belief that is not a religious belief.<sup>41</sup> Edmund Wilson sees in Eliot more of a "desire to believe in religious revelation . . . rather than a genuine belief," but admits that one cannot doubt the reality of the religious experience to which Eliot testifies in his writings. At the same time, Wilson feels his moral principles are more authentic than his mysticism, "and his relation to the Anglo-Catholic Church appears largely artificial."<sup>42</sup> F. O. Matthiessen states he is puzzled by critics who welcomed the author of The Waste Land as "a modern prophet" and yet "now damn him because he moves toward faith," as well as others who deplored his earlier work, and "now welcome him with hosannas," because there is a consistency throughout his work on the theme of "the emptiness of life without belief."<sup>43</sup> Helen Gardner, after commenting that "Ash Wednesday" shows that "To Christian and non-Christian conversion is incomprehensible," says its theme of purgation is "crossed by another theme," for clearly the poem springs "from intimately personal experience."<sup>44</sup>

Most of these comments of critics, and the statements quoted from Eliot's writings, stress his conviction that the answer to modern man's need for a regeneration experience is, as far as he is concerned, to be found through the Christian Church. Yet at the same time he indicates, even in his prose, the value of non-Christian religions in the improvement of human culture, and it is important to understand why he uses the ideas of other religions in his art. In "The Idea of a Christian Society," Eliot says that "it does not





require a Christian attitude to perceive that the modern system of society has a great deal in it that is inherently bad."<sup>45</sup> In "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture," he says that the actual religion of no European people has ever been purely Christian, or purely anything else, for traces of more primitive faiths have been absorbed and remain to some extent. He states also that "To believe that we are religious people and that other people are without religion is a simplification which approaches distortion." And in the same chapter he says that in comparing our culture with that of non-Christian nations, "we must be prepared to find that ours is in one respect or another inferior." He does not deny that Britain, even if turning from Christianity to "some inferior or materialistic religion" could develop a culture even more brilliant than it presently has. Yet, "that would not be evidence that the new religion was true, and that Christianity was false. It would merely prove that any religion, while it lasts, and on its own level gives an apparent meaning to life, provides the framework for a culture, and protects the mass of humanity from boredom and despair."<sup>46</sup>

In his poetry and plays, Eliot makes use of folklore and oriental religions to develop his basic ideas. Particularly do we see the value of these references in the theme of regeneration. In the Notes to The Waste Land, Eliot acknowledges his indebtedness to Jessie Weston and James Frazer, and I wish to indicate briefly some of their findings which influenced Eliot's portrayal of the death-rebirth myth in human thought. From Miss Weston's book he became aware of the recurring patterns in various myths and the similarity between the vegetation myths of the rebirth of the year, the fertility



myths of the rebirth of the potency of man, the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection, and the Grail legend of purification. Miss Weston discusses the attitudes of "our Aryan forefathers" towards the sequence of birth, growth and decay in nature, and their belief that the principle of life and fertility in animal and vegetable was the same, and notes in Greek art and literature as well the idea of the recurring cycle - dependent on a supernatural being - of birth, death, and rebirth.<sup>47</sup> Miss Weston also recounts the stories of Tammuz, Adonis, and Mithra (each of which includes a resurrection) and - most important for Eliot - gives a detailed account of the legend of the Fisher King. Her thesis concerning the origin of the Grail legend is that there is an essential kinship between Christianity and the Pagan Mysteries, that both have contributed to the legend we now have, but that its origin is in the ancient vegetation ritual alone.<sup>48</sup> Eliot found in this idea, and the Fisher King legend, a way to suggest not only the idea of a modern wasteland, but also all the wastelands of the past.

Eliot used primarily the volumes on Adonis, Attis, and Osiris in James Frazer's The Golden Bough. Frazer cites in detail the myths and rituals surrounding each of these, and suggests a similarity in the death-rebirth pattern to that later incorporated in Christian doctrine. Festivals of Adonis were held mainly in Western Asia and in Greek lands, and at these annual occasions the death of the god was mourned, and images carried out as if for burial were thrown into the sea or into springs; his resurrection was usually celebrated the following day. His affinity with vegetation is established through the story of his birth: he was said to have been born from a myrrh-tree,





when its bark burst after a ten months' gestation period. Attis also was supposed to be a god of vegetation, and his death and resurrection were annually mourned and rejoiced over at a spring festival; Attis was thought to have been a young shepherd or herdsman, yet the rites and legends were so much like those of Adonis that the two were sometimes identified. Osiris was the god in ancient Egypt whose death and resurrection were annually celebrated and he is, like Adonis and Attis, a kind of vegetation god identified with the death-rebirth vegetation cycle. The myth of Osiris as it developed endowed him with a number of other characteristics, and he was ultimately regarded not only as a corn-god, but as a tree-spirit, a god of fertility, and the god of the dead. He was to the Egyptians the proof of immortality, and thus his worship was emphasized more than that of any other god.<sup>49</sup>

Eliot's sense of tradition gave him a fascination for such myths, as did his need for some unified pattern to express human experience. In the many vegetation and fertility myths, and in the Grail myth, as well as in the Christian doctrine of resurrection, he saw a valuable unity that gave a more universal meaning to what he wished to express. From the standpoint of literary technique, it is easy to see the value of Eliot's juxtaposition of Christian and non-Christian ideas. Since "all human culture" was his concern, his numerous allusions aid in creating "the universe of his work" and also in suggesting his own religious experiences. It may well be that Eliot felt the language of Christianity, through long use, had become ineffective, and that one way of making the message new was to



present "essentially Christian insights in non-Christian camouflage, . . . to demonstrate that Christianity was not the prisoner of Western Culture."<sup>50</sup> What The Golden Bough gives to Eliot is "a point where factual past and factual present meet."<sup>51</sup>

Eliot's review of Ulysses aids in explaining the method he himself adopted. He writes of using myth to manipulate a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, and indicates that what James Joyce has done will be done by many after him, for this method is "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."<sup>52</sup> What Eliot suggests is that ancient and contemporary behaviour are "already juxtaposed in contemporary consciousness," and that a poet can further refine those juxtapositions in order to reveal a ground of identity and "a metaphysical community in all men."<sup>53</sup> Eliot illustrates this belief in such a "ground of identity" through his use of a Greek myth as background for each of his contemporary plays.

Eliot's interest in oriental religions probably began through the influence of Irving Babbitt. Though his conversion to Christianity led him to depart from Babbitt's philosophical position and also to criticize him for his defence of Buddhism, Eliot did use the ideas embedded in oriental mysticism, particularly in The Waste Land and the Four Quartets. This introduction of eastern theology into Eliot's poetry and plays is not an accident, "but part of a design to show the universality of the 'hints and guesses' given to all who 'seek God, and, it might be, touch and find him'. The detachment Krishna speaks





of involves the same surrender of self-will as the 'prayer of the One Annunciation', and is like the detachment which Thomas wins, after he has rejected the four tempters."<sup>54</sup> In a preface to Thoughts for Meditation (1951), Eliot wrote:

Some readers regard Asiatic literature as the sole repository of religious understanding; there are others who, perhaps under the prejudice that mysticism is something morbid and perverse, refuse to venture further than a narrow Christian tradition. For both kinds of reader, it is salutary to learn that the Truth is not 'occult', and that it is not wholly confined to their own religious tradition or on the other hand to an alien culture and religion.<sup>55</sup>

The synthesis Eliot makes of the disparate ideas in his works does not do violence to Christian orthodoxy, in spite of what Miss Gardner terms an "unbridgeable gap" between the views of Incarnation in Hinduism and in Christianity. Even though the incarnations of Vishnu give no significance to history, and the unique Incarnation of Christianity does, Eliot envisages redemption from history and redemption of history, and by his emphasis on the doctrine of the Incarnation rather than the Atonement he can believe in Redemption "through the realisation of timelessness without alienating himself from Christianity."<sup>56</sup>

Eliot's attitude toward religions other than Christianity is suggested in part of the seventh Chorus from The Rock:

And the Spirit moved upon the face of the water.  
 And men who turned towards the light and were known of the light  
 Invented the Higher Religions; and the Higher Religions were good  
 And led men from light to light, to knowledge of Good and Evil.  
 But their light was ever surrounded and shot with darkness  
 As the air of temperate seas is pierced by the still dead breath  
     of the Arctic Current;  
 And they came to an end, a dead end stirred with a flicker of  
     life,  
 And they came to the withered ancient look of a child that has  
     died of starvation.





Prayer wheels, worship of the dead, denial of this world,  
 affirmation of rites with forgotten meanings  
 In the restless wind-whipped sand, or the hills where the  
 wind will not let the snow rest.  
 Waste and void. Waste and void. And darkness on the face  
 of the deep.  
 Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and  
 of time,  
 A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call  
 history: transecting, bisecting the world of time, a  
 moment in time but not like a moment of time, . . . . 57

Here Eliot portrays all these religions as stages in a development  
 leading to the Incarnation of Christ; though such religions were  
 invented by men, they were men "turned towards the light," and to  
 them was granted a partial revelation.

Because T. S. Eliot was a convinced Christian and because  
 there is not only a Christian emphasis in his prose, but also a  
 Christian orientation in his poetry and plays, it is important to  
 consider the relationship between his art and his personal belief.  
 Certainly reaction to his poetry differs a great deal from reader  
 to reader, and undoubtedly some of this is due to the reader's res-  
 ponse to the ideas contained in it. The Christian poet today is, of  
 course, in a situation vastly different from that of Dante, for Dante  
 lived in, and wrote for, a society of Christians. Eliot, on the  
 other hand, lived in a world of scepticism and agnosticism and yet  
 tried to maintain a Christian emphasis in his works.<sup>58</sup> It is doubt-  
 less true, as Matthiessen points out, that a great many readers who  
 found delight in Eliot's early poems do not appreciate his later work  
 because it is religious. The general reaction may well be that re-  
 ferred to by Allen Tate in his review of "Ash Wednesday": "The  
 reasoning that is being brought to bear upon Mr. Eliot's recent verse



is as follows: Anglo-Catholicism would not at all satisfy me; therefore his poetry declines under its influence. Moreover, the poetry is not contemporaneous; it doesn't solve any labor problems; it is special, personal, and it can do us no good."<sup>59</sup>

Elizabeth Drew says that while Eliot does insist on the acceptance of the letter of Christian dogma in his prose - and "large numbers of the tribe find [this] a difficult medicine to swallow" - the poetry is "never polemical and propagandist."<sup>60</sup> And R. P. Blackmur says that even as Yeats' poetry is not magic, Eliot's poetry is not religion: religion and magic in each case are simply backgrounds.<sup>61</sup> While it is true that a reader's acceptance or rejection of a poet's doctrine may be irrelevant, yet at the same time a poet's belief is not unimportant, as it will affect his "sense of his age." Matthiessen states, accurately I believe, that Eliot's work gives the reader a sense of integrity and authenticity, for one feels that "it corresponds not to any preconceived standard of what he ought to think or believe, but to what he has actually felt and understood by listening to himself, by studying the deepest elements in his nature."<sup>62</sup>

In order to consider Eliot's own theory of poetry and belief, I will refer to a number of his relevant comments in order of date, and endeavor to show the progression in his thought. One of his earliest essays, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), states that "Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality."<sup>63</sup>







The essay on "Dante" in The Sacred Wood indicates that poetry can to some extent be philosophic, in the sense that it can be penetrated by a philosophic idea, and furthermore that one cannot really separate poetry and philosophy. Eliot uses the work of Dante to demonstrate that philosophy may be essential to the structure, and need not detract from the beauty of the poem.<sup>64</sup>

In "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927) Eliot says poetry must not be considered a substitute for philosophy or theology, for it has its own function - a function that is emotional.<sup>65</sup> In this essay he suggests that Shakespeare's private views may have been very different from what we may extract from his works, even as his own views are often different from his poetical ideas: "I am used to having cosmic significances, which I never suspected, extracted from my work (such as it is) by enthusiastic persons at a distance; and to being informed that something which I meant seriously is vers de societe; and to having my personal biography reconstructed from passages which I got out of books, or which I invented out of nothing because they sounded well; and to having my biography invariably ignored in what I did write from personal experience."<sup>66</sup>

At this point in his career, he seems to be in general agreement with I. A. Richards, who stresses the emotional effect of poetry, or the unified response which should result in the right reader. Yet in the same year (1927) Eliot contradicts this view, saying: "Even where beliefs are not made explicit, how far can any poetry be detached from the beliefs of the poet?"<sup>67</sup> Also, in another article that year, he says, "I am not so unsophisticated as to assert that Mr.



Richards' theory is false. It is probably quite true. Nevertheless, it is only one aspect; it is a psychological theory of value, but we must also have a moral theory of value. The two are incompatible, but both must be held, and that is just the problem. If I believe, as I do believe, that the chief distinction of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, Mr. Richards' theory of value is inadequate: my advantage is that I can believe my own and his too, whereas he is limited to his own."<sup>68</sup>

In 1929, in a note to Section II of "Dante," Eliot states that his theory of poetic belief and understanding is similar to that of Richards, yet different in the sense that he sees a definite relation between Dante's beliefs as a man and his beliefs as a poet. And concerning his own poetry he says he cannot, in practice, "wholly separate my poetic appreciation from my personal beliefs. . . . Actually, one probably has more pleasure in the poetry when one shares the beliefs of the poet. On the other hand there is a distinct pleasure in enjoying poetry as poetry when one does not share the beliefs, analogous to the pleasure of 'mastering' other men's philosophical systems."<sup>69</sup>

In "Poetry and Propaganda" (1930) Eliot is concerned with the question of whether or not poetry can be used to prove anything, and to what extent it can illustrate a belief. He states that probably the "truest philosophy is the best material for the greatest poet, so that the poet must be rated in the end both by the philosophy he realizes in poetry and by the fullness and adequacy of the realization. . . . for some kinds of poetry it is necessary that the poet himself should believe the philosophy of which he is making use."<sup>70</sup>





In his Introduction to The Wheel of Fire (1930) Eliot says: "It is only a personal prejudice of mine, that I prefer poetry with a clear philosophical pattern. . . . I like a definite and dogmatic philosophy, preferably a Christian and Catholic one, but alternatively that of Epicurus or of the Forest Philosophers of India."<sup>71</sup>

Eliot shifts his emphasis somewhat when in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933) he states that if the "doctrine, theory, belief, or 'view of life' presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate."<sup>72</sup> But in After Strange Gods (1934) the view expressed is similar to that of "Poetry and Propaganda" in that Eliot indicates it is important whether or not the belief expressed in a literary work is acceptable.

In "Religion and Literature" (1935) Eliot says that the greatness of literature cannot be determined by literary standards alone, even though these standards alone can state whether or not it is literature. He is not speaking primarily of religious literature, but of what should be the relation between religion and all literature; he says readers should know what they like, and furthermore Christians should know what they ought to like. "In ages like our own, in which there is no such common agreement, it is the more necessary for Christian readers to scrutinize their reading, especially of works of imagination, with explicit ethical and theological standards."<sup>73</sup>





In 1945, in "The Social Function of Poetry," Eliot says that the term "didactic" poetry has undergone some change in that it may mean 'conveying information,' or it may mean 'giving moral instruction,' or it may mean something which comprehends both. He says every poet, great or not, has something to impart besides pleasure: "there is always the communication of some new experience, or some fresh understanding of the familiar, or the expression of something we have experienced but have no words for, which enlarges our consciousness or refines our sensibility."<sup>74</sup>

Eliot states in "To Criticize the Critic" (1961) that he finds himself "constantly irritated by having [his] words, perhaps written thirty or forty years ago, quoted as if [he] had uttered them yesterday." Therefore, it is important to note the changes in his thought through the years. I believe Allen Austin gives a helpful summary when he generalizes as follows concerning the development of Eliot's theory of poetry and belief: "In his early criticism Eliot maintains that belief does not or should not enter into our judgment of the work; then, after a series of contradictory statements in his middle period, he concludes that the belief or philosophy embodied in the work must be considered in judging the work's 'greatness'."<sup>76</sup>

In summary, then, we may say that although Eliot indicates strict belief need not be accorded to the ideas of a poet, they should not be ignored; furthermore, though a poet may not adhere to his personal beliefs in the creation of poetry, they are bound to affect what he writes. Eliot does not reject intellectual belief in poetry, but distinguishes between what may be termed genuine belief and assumed



belief. Therefore, because his theory does not utterly separate a poet's art and his belief, the reader is encouraged to relate Eliot's Christian convictions to his poetry and plays. Kristian Smidt, in writing of Eliot's beliefs as they appear in his art, says, "They may not make up an organized philosophy, and they may have been very much changed in the process of composition. But they are there. The poet's views and attitudes must colour what he writes, and they cannot be so much changed that one can mistake their general direction."<sup>77</sup> For this reason, I feel it is interesting, and instructive, to note and to discuss the concept of regeneration in Eliot's work primarily from the Christian standpoint.

From the references made in this chapter to Eliot's statements concerning the spiritual need of modern man, and the importance of the Christian message of renewal, I believe his personal commitment is apparent. Yet his poetry and plays, as I shall indicate in the following chapters, are not designed as Christian propaganda. There is a universality in his portrayal of the death-rebirth theme that results from the use of Greek myth and oriental religions as well as Christian dogma, and from the avoidance, in general, of traditional Christian terms. Certainly this juxtaposition of various philosophies not only illustrates his stated theory of art and belief, but in a significant manner intensifies the modern relevance, as well as the timeless nature, of Christian regeneration.





## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EARLY POEMS

There is a consistent emphasis throughout Eliot's poetry on the need and the possibility of spiritual regeneration for modern man. This unifying theme to some extent at least seems to express Eliot's personal search and religious development. Eliot did state that a poet's beliefs must influence his art, though the personal aspect must not be over-emphasized. It is possible, and often necessary, he maintained, for a poet to assume - temporarily - certain beliefs simply because they are of value to his poetry: "They may even form a system or cluster of beliefs more or less distinct from what he 'ordinarily' adheres to. But they are none the less beliefs, and the fact that they are determined by a poetic mood does not prevent them from entering into other domains of his life than poetry. Nor does it prevent them from affecting his reader in other domains besides that of poetic enjoyment."<sup>1</sup>

Philip Wheelwright, writing of Eliot's philosophical themes, says the primary theme "which stirs Eliot's poetry into intellectual movement is the barrenness of man's contemporary estate."<sup>2</sup> And Miss Audrey Cahill terms the central concern of Eliot's art "the human predicament," a term which is useful in tracing from his early to his later works the movement from disillusionment to faith, so that indeed the later work is more of a "fulfilment rather than a contradiction of his earlier work."<sup>3</sup> Certainly there is a unity throughout,



for all of Eliot's art shows the need of belief in human life; yet at the same time one cannot ignore the significant difference in tone and in approach from "Ash Wednesday" and onwards. In the extension of his vision, Eliot moves from the plight of the individual, in the early poems, to the plight of a whole society, in The Waste Land, and later to the point where in a more specific manner the human struggle is seen to have a purpose, and redemptive love is seen as a reality, as in "Little Gidding."

But all themes in Eliot can be subsumed in the general one of regeneration, and this reveals itself in Eliot's early poems in a mainly negative way, by "hints and guesses"; whereas in Four Quartets the approach becomes positive and explicit. None of his poetry, however, states a religious or philosophical position directly, but rather through imagery and symbol conveys spiritual truth. For this study I have chosen Eliot's major poems and plays, and include two relatively minor poems ("The Hippopotamus" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service") in order to more fully represent his early work. In this chapter I propose to demonstrate that though the poems written prior to Eliot's Christian conversion concentrate on the "wasteland" theme, they do not present an utterly desolate picture. For in so vividly stressing man's condition, Eliot implies the existence of an effective solution.

In pursuing the theme of regeneration in Eliot's poetry, I am keeping in mind his own comment about the danger of a critic, or a reader, "assuming that the interpretation of a poem, if valid, is necessarily an account of what the author consciously or unconsciously





was trying to do."<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the consistency of this theme in Eliot's work, and the explicit statements in his prose concerning the importance of Christian revelation, surely provide an adequate rationale for conducting such a study from the standpoint of Christian dogma.

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is Eliot's first important poem, and includes several hints of the regeneration idea. Prufrock, without a doubt, is a tragic figure who suffers through the defeat of his idealistic dreams and unsatisfied desires. His world is, as Grover Smith indicates, a closed one, and the manner in which Eliot develops the poem emphasizes the hero's sense of "impotent inferiority or isolation."<sup>5</sup>

The world Eliot creates in "Prufrock" is, obviously, a world of emotional realities and the entire scene suggests disease, helplessness, and a lack of vigour and vitality. Through images of tortuous streets and the fog-cat, and symbols of social and sexual failure, Mr. Prufrock's retreat into a despairing world of daydream is dramatized; and through images of the sea, which suggest both creation and destruction, both the positive and negative elements of his conflict are stressed:

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.  
.....  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Since Prufrock does not choose to follow a way of rebirth, the "chambers of the sea" suggest not so much a revival of life as a





deliberate returning - at the very point of possible regeneration - to a place of seclusion and refuge.<sup>7</sup> And the final words, "we drown" would thus indicate a resolution of his problems through escape. This poem demonstrates not simply the need for renewal of human beings like the protagonist, but suggests that every man is destined for a better life: "It is a vision that is fundamentally a religious one: it sees human squalor - physical, mental and spiritual - as a fit subject for poetry, because it sees the possibility of human redemption."<sup>8</sup>

Certain key symbols of the redemption theme which recur throughout Eliot's work are evident in "Prufrock." For example, we have noted the water imagery, which is ordinarily associated with rebirth. In addition, the symbol of the stairs appears first in this poem, for Prufrock is mounting a stairway while contemplating a possible crisis of decision: whether to proceed, or "to turn back and descend the stair." As well as the literalness of this image, there is a symbolic significance that is understood more fully in "Ash Wednesday." Leonard Unger calls it an inner "posture of awareness" that in "Prufrock" suggests not only his state of mind, and his indecisiveness, but the possibility of moving forward beyond his physical and mental state - of achieving, perhaps, a rebirth into even a moment of reality.<sup>9</sup>

Though its nature is not explicit, regeneration is certainly alluded to in this early poem; the pathos, however, results from the fact that the protagonist is unable to enter into a life he is certain exists.



"Gerontion" is regarded by B. Rajan as portraying "that typical Eliot character who cannot die because he has not lived";<sup>10</sup> and by Grover Smith as a poem where the speaker "is not at the center, cannot attain the center, and does not believe. He perceives with horror a disaster he cannot interrupt, because the Passion is 'not believed in, or if still believed, / In memory only'."<sup>11</sup> George Williamson, however, states that "The unflinching honesty of this confession redeems it from utter hopelessness, for without such honesty no faith will be possible and there will be little hope in 'waiting for rain'."<sup>12</sup>

The statement, "Here I am, . . . waiting for rain," indicates that the speaker is longing for, and hoping for, some kind of rebirth, and also suggests that Eliot, even at this point in his career, may have been consciously alluding to the legend of the Fisher King, and the fertility rituals of paganism.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the speaker's condition is emphasized by the fact that his mind goes back to the primitive, pre-Christian concept of death as violent and hopeless:

I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, fought.

And the fact that his rented house is decayed, and that it belongs to a Jew, further stresses the alienation of Gerontion (who recognizes Christ) from both a religion and a culture. The goat, which generally symbolizes potency, is here a symbol of declining power, for it "coughs at night in the field overhead."<sup>14</sup> The entire first stanza, therefore, emphasizes the wretched condition of the speaker who is, nonetheless, "waiting for rain."





"Signs are taken for wonders" begins a passage more impersonal and more objective than the first. The succeeding lines recall the Nativity, and indicate that Gerontion has already known "Christ the tiger" and made the type of response that has cut him off from the source of life. Because he was unable to "apprehend the 'Word swaddled with darkness,' the darkness of his own mind," he regresses: "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" Only after a contemplation of history does insight come:

Think now

History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
 And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
 Guides us by vanities. Think now  
 She gives when our attention is distracted  
 And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
 That the giving famishes the craving.

History is, in a sense, the source of man's salvation insofar as it contains and records the recurring presence of the mystery of death and life which is embodied in the figure of a dying and reviving god. Implied in the passage also is the idea that the deity presented is too great, and comes both too soon and too late, when people are no longer capable of a "literal, fervent and immediate acceptance," but have, like Gerontion, lost the ecstasy of assent":<sup>15</sup>

Gives too late

What's not believed in, or if still believed,  
 In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon  
 Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with  
 Till the refusal propagates a fear.

The "reconsidered passion" is like that of Gerontion early in the poem, and seems to mean the manner of both aging persons and cultures. Refusal to contemplate the Incarnation leads to a fear that there is no true god: in such a state of mind, the idea of rebirth and regeneration



does not exist. Gerontion recognizes also that age and mortality are inescapable:

Think

Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices  
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues  
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.  
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

Refusal to believe forces man simply to endure what he has caused, for the hope for immortality cannot be restored by either fear or courage. John Vickery says the "tears" are "the knowledge of this essential human dilemma, of man's loss of divinity and immortality and of his having to endure death if he would regain them. In bearing wrath, the tree not only suffers for the knowledge of mortality man has gained from it, but also produces wrath as its fruit, thereby revealing itself as the vegetable analogue of the conquering Christ. It is the form beneath which timid and straightened imaginations have hid the dying and reviving god whom men must share in communion if they would live eternally."<sup>16</sup>

Thus Gerontion sees the necessity of destroying and surrendering his old life as a prelude to a new existence - and a new time: "The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours." This statement, plus the words "We have not reached conclusion, when I / Stiffen in a rented house" indicate that he realizes death is not the end for men: "I have not made this show purposelessly." Moreover, two ways in which one can conclude his life are implied in the final part of the poem. The first is by total and irrevocable destruction ("whirled / Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear / In fractured atoms") and the second is through the natural and human worlds submitting to





the Gulf. A sense of continuity, and of life coming out of death, is given by the latter, for in seeing everything return to water, Gerontion realizes that "the apparent threatened return of chaos is in reality a prelude to Genesis and the divine creation upon which every man's existence is contingent."<sup>17</sup> Even though both "brain and season are dry," this is not a hopeless state, but one which leads to ultimate rebirth.

"The Hippopotamus" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" both concern the rejection of "Christ the tiger," and thus the rejection of spiritual regeneration. Unlike characters in earlier poems, the people referred to here are outwardly religious, but hardened toward the Word. The extremely apt epigraph to "The Hippopotamus," which is a reference to the church of the Laodiceans whose members were "neither cold nor hot," (Revelation 3) suggests Eliot is not, in this poem, attacking the Church, but portraying the pathos of such a spiritual condition. If he did not feel the Church was worthy of preservation, such a portrayal would be meaningless.<sup>18</sup>

"The Hippopotamus" consists of a series of contrasts between "the flesh," represented by the hippopotamus, and "the spirit," represented by the Church. In spite of its apparent strength, the animal is "merely flesh and blood" while the "True Church . . . is based upon a rock." As the contrast continues, it is evident Eliot is being satirical:

The hippopotamus's day  
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;  
God works in a mysterious way -  
The Church can sleep and feed at once.





Yet the animal, though representing the weakness of natural man, cold in faith, is perhaps more acceptable than a lukewarm Church made up of Christians who "can sleep and feed at once." If spiritually asleep, the Church cannot fulfil its mission; the animal ("the flesh") is at least awake some of the time and though capable of error is also capable of reform.<sup>19</sup>

I saw the 'potamus take wing  
Ascending from the damp savannas  
And quiring angels round him sing  
The praise of God in loud hosannas.

The idea is implicit that the completely materialistic may have more hope of redemption than the "complacently spiritual," and one is reminded of the New Testament parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of the satirical approach of "The Hippopotamus" toward the matter of spiritual vitality, the reader senses Eliot's serious intent. Because this is one of his early poems, written before his public commitment to the Christian faith, it may be a mistake to interpret too rigidly his references to the "True Church." Certainly an Anglo-Catholic, though he might decry the condition of the visible Church, still sees it as the Body of Christ on earth, and the instrument of God's grace in the world. While this thought may be implied in "The Hippopotamus," it is subordinate to the exposure of the Church as "neither hot nor cold" and in desperate need of renewal. And the epigraph is a vivid reminder of the destiny of such a Church, for Christ said to Laodicea, "I will spue thee out of my mouth."



"Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" shows a similar preoccupation with man's need of redemption, for the poet portrays a sense of disgust with "fruitless formalism." A pertinent point to note in this connection is that the spiritually sterile ministers are compared to neuter bees whose proper reproductive function, "that of conveying the pollen of truth to their spiritually unfertilized parishioners, is thwarted by religious sterility":<sup>21</sup>

Along the garden-wall the bees  
With hairy bellies pass between  
The staminate and pistillate,  
Blest office of the epicene.

Sterility is emphasized also by the reference to the "enervate Origen" who castrated himself for religious reasons, and denied the bodily resurrection because he apparently felt the body unworthy of such honor. Against both the church leaders and Origen stands "the Word," whose purity is suggested through a painting of the baptism of Christ:

A painter of the Umbrian school  
Designed upon a gesso ground  
The nimbus of the Baptized God.

Sweeney in his bath represents a parody of the baptismal ritual: "the outward and visible sign is the same, but Sweeney belongs to a world in which its sacramental significance is unknown." Yet in contrast to the sickly worshippers "Clutching piaculative pence" Sweeney - solid and materialistic (and reminiscent of the "broad-backed hippopotamus") seems almost healthy and good. The painting of Christ's baptism may be said to be a reminder of the meeting place of the two worlds suggested by the outwardly religious, and Sweeney.<sup>23</sup>

Both "The Hippopotamus" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" express through satire the result when the Church ignores her redemptive role in the world. While the Church in "Mr. Eliot's Sunday





Morning Service" is puritanical and sectarian, and in "The Hippopotamus" is formal and sacramentarian, the result in both cases is that human life is divided into the two realms of sacred and secular, and the meeting point between the two is unknown or ignored.<sup>24</sup> Both poems present illustrations of spiritual sterility in the very institution destined to be an agent of regeneration; yet they are not so much a damning attack on Christianity as an incisive criticism by one who is sensitive not only to the ills of Christianity but to its potential value and relevance in the modern world.

The complexity of The Waste Land has resulted in varied responses to it. While Miss Audrey Cahill says its main themes are fear and intense boredom,<sup>25</sup> Edmund Wilson finds it the most complete expression of Eliot's theme of emotional starvation<sup>26</sup> and Grover Smith sees in it man in isolation, burdened with guilt and in need of regeneration.<sup>27</sup> Cleanth Brooks, comparing Eliot's theme to those of Dante and Spenser, says that whereas Dante's Divine Comedy was "the statement of a faith held and agreed upon," and the Fairie Queene is "the projection of a 'new' system of beliefs," Eliot's The Waste Land is "the rehabilitation of a system of beliefs, known but now discredited." Thus Eliot cannot assume acceptance of his statement, as could Dante; nor does he care about proving his statement, as did Spenser; rather he deals with his theme indirectly: "The Christian material is at the center, but the poet never deals with it directly. The theme of resurrection is made on the surface in terms of the fertility rites; the words which the thunder speaks are Sanskrit words."<sup>28</sup> Brooks goes on to explain that Eliot's method is essential because for him ordinary



Christian terminology is a mass of clichés which must be brought to life again: "The method adopted in The Waste Land is thus violent and radical, but thoroughly necessary. For the renewing and vitalizing of symbols which have been crusted over with a distorting familiarity demands the type of organization which we have already commented on. . . . In this way the statement of beliefs emerges through confusion and cynicism - not in spite of them."<sup>29</sup>

The difference in critical interpretations of The Waste Land relates primarily to the question of whether or not there is progression, and hope, in the poem. Its ambiguity makes this a complex question and, as R. L. Brett has suggested, even if a reader does see the possibility of rebirth alluded to, he may still be uncertain whether this constitutes a complete break with the past, or whether it is simply another phase of "the endless cycle of birth and death."<sup>30</sup>

In order to determine whether or not there are hints of hope, and definite allusions to a possible regeneration, in The Waste Land, it is necessary for a reader to understand Eliot's method in writing this poem. This is best explained by his own words in a review he wrote of Ulysses:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. . . . Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and The Golden Bough have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step towards making the modern world possible for art, toward that order and form which Mr. Aldington so earnestly desires.<sup>31</sup>





Through the use of myth, Eliot is able to present certain attitudes and ideas which, if presented in literal prose form, would be dismissed as ridiculous by many. Yet the great mysteries of life have always been, and still are, birth and death, and living a meaningful life: "Eliot's belief in the need for personal regeneration could not be effectively stated solely in terms of the society he was describing as a wasteland. . . . Fortunately, Eliot was able through his discovery of the recurrence of the myth of desolation and rebirth to give his poem primitive force, to find a kind of sanction for his doctrine."<sup>32</sup> He portrays wastelands as an ancient experience, and also portrays the "supernatural sanction" of primitive people that justified their search for new life. And since the pull of modern culture seems to be in the opposite direction, with only the death and rebirth of nature to suggest this possibility, Eliot's myth is literary rather than cultural. Through his method the modern reader is forced to view the modern world against past centuries of human experience, and to see a certain timelessness and relevance to the basic principle of spiritual aridity and need for rejuvenation.

The basic myth, that of the Fisher King, is one that aptly serves Eliot's purpose of portraying the redemption idea, for it contains a theme common even in pre-Christian ritual. In this myth, the Fisher King's impotence is reflected in the waste condition of his lands, and this connection between infertility in nature and sexual impotence enables Eliot to use as a central part of his theme the sexual manifestations of the disease of the waste land. Furthermore, the myth itself suggests hope of recovery, for the king's sickness





could be healed, though not through any action of his own. And this is significant for The Waste Land, because it surely provides additional basis for noting carefully the hints of possible renewal in Eliot's poem.

One of these "hints" of possible renewal is the frequent use of water imagery in The Waste Land. This image, central in the Christian symbolism of redemption, is also one of the four elements which were believed to dissolve and re-form. In this poem water imagery predominates: from spring rains and the wet hair of the hyacinth girl to the Thames flowing out to sea and returning as rain bringing life to the land. The allusions to Webster's "Call for the robin redbreast and the wren," and to Shakespeare's "Full fathom five," are to poems that have been called the great elegies of earth and water. The element of fire is alluded to through the contrast between St. Augustine and Buddha in "The Fire Sermon," and air is suggested through the "brown fog" of a London winter. Air also stirs up and confuses the perfumes of the woman in "A Game of Chess," and is the element of the fearful apparitions and mirages of the closing scenes. These references to the elements, along with the theme of metamorphosis suggested by the allusion to the Philomela legend in "A Game of Chess," all support a death and rebirth theme.<sup>33</sup>

The epigraph to The Waste Land refers to the Cumean Sibyl who wanted to die, and was hanging in a cage forever because she had forgotten the need for regeneration in the mere lust to endure: "She is the heroine of all that is stupid and clutching in life, if you like of all that survives, and is a little outside the poem, suspended over it



in a cage. Her plight is due to the fact that she had asked Apollo for as many years as the grains of sand in her hand.<sup>34</sup> She thus symbolizes the pathos of the waste land, which is the death-in-life of its inhabitants.

Regeneration is suggested in "The Burial of the Dead" in several ways. First, the title itself refers to the Anglican burial service, and this reminds the reader of the Christian doctrine of immortality as expressed by St. Paul: "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Here, however, Eliot begins with the thought that spring - and new life - is dreaded rather than welcomed: "April is the cruelest month." The reference to "Lilacs out of the dead land" indicates life, yet the speaker prefers the hibernation of winter.<sup>35</sup>

The redemption theme is suggested through the garden scene because it recalls the traditional initiation in the presence of the Grail,<sup>36</sup> but the quester here fails for though he sees a vision he is unable to respond and therefore does not experience a rebirth:

I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

This is the first of several garden scenes in Eliot's poetry, all of which in some sense indicate the possibility of a renewal experience, and a glimpse of reality. Such references inevitably recall as well the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, and Paradise.<sup>37</sup>

In Madame Sosostris is found another modern version of the theme of regeneration. As a "wise woman," or midwife<sup>38</sup> she recalls the Egyptian diviners who professed to control fertility and to fore-





cast the rising and falling of the waters of the Nile through the Tarot cards. Unfortunately, her power is now dead (she has a bad cold) and she practises in an atmosphere of fear: "One must be so careful these days."<sup>39</sup> Yet, like modern man's persistence in retaining the forms of Christianity, in which he no longer believes, Madame Sosostri's Tarot cards continue throughout the poem, the most important one, paradoxically assigned to the poem's protagonist, being that of "the drowned Phoenician Sailor." In warning him to "fear death by water," she identifies the drowned Phoenician sailor with Alonso in The Tempest, who was supposed by his son Ferdinand to be drowned but who later reappeared. Madame Sosostri does not realize, as do none of the inhabitants of the waste land, that the way into life may be by death. Thus the line from Ariel's song - "Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!" - provides a central symbol in the poem for the process of metamorphosis in both its destructive and creative aspects.<sup>40</sup>

Again, Belladonna, like all the women in The Waste Land, appears as the antithesis of fertility: "Her name suggests poison and the numbing of sensitivity, coupled with the aridity of rocks and a preference for 'situations' instead of fruitful union";<sup>41</sup> the man with the three staves, Eliot says, stands for the Fisher King; and the Wheel suggests a common cyclic pattern symbolizing, on one level, the futility of existence. Yet the symbolic importance of the Wheel card further emphasizes the presence amid the flux of human existence or time of the "still point" representing Eternity. In Indian thought the Wheel of Existence, or Wheel of Rebirth, includes the idea of reincarnation, and ultimate perfection when a man has liberated himself "not only from



all earthly desires, but also from the delusion that the world of sense has any real existence. It is then that his true self becomes one with the Absolute, with Brahman. . . . For those who do not attain this ultimate goal, there is no escape from the cycle of perpetual rebirths, nor is there any hope for them to be born into a world that has made some positive progress since they were last born."<sup>42</sup> But in Christian thought, allowance must be made for the Incarnation of Christ to enter the cyclic view of history, and this is noted in the wheel imagery of the Four Quartets. Here, in The Waste Land, there is suggested by the introduction of the Wheel card from the Tarot pack only the more generalized interpretation of the flux and the "still point."

Among the Tarot cards there should be one of The Hanged Man, whom Eliot says alludes to both the Hanged God of Frazer, and the hooded figure (Part V) representing the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus; this card, however, is lost, indicating that its meaning is completely unknown to Madame Sosostris. The "crowds of people, walking around in a ring," suggest not only the aimlessness and emptiness of Madame Sosostris's own life, but also form a suitable transition to the final section of this poem where the horror of life in a modern city is portrayed. The "Unreal City" may be intended to suggest Europe, and especially London, at the end of World War I, and thus intensify the idea of the desperate spiritual need of modern man. Yet in view of the allusion to Dante ("I had not thought death had undone so many"), it is significant also to recall Dante's journey through hell and note that it began on Good Friday and ended, when he emerged on the





other side of the earth, on Easter Sunday morning. In the same way, there is hope of regeneration for those in the death-in-life state in the "Unreal City."

The mysterious corpse planted in the garden maintains this allusion to a resurrection. It is possibly a reference to the myth of Osiris, as cited by James Frazer, for each year at the festival of the sowing of the grain priests would bury effigies of the god made of earth and corn, and when these were dug up again the corn would, of course, have sprouted from the body. This was believed to be the cause of the growth of the crops. Furthermore, in Egyptian mythology, the dog was a common symbol of aid to rebirth, for Isis collected the pieces of the corpse of Osiris with the aid of dogs.<sup>44</sup> In any case, the emotional effect of this passage is one of horror both towards the crowd, and towards the corpse; yet the allusions to Dante's journey, to Easter Sunday, and to the resurrection myth of Osiris, suggest that the "death-in-life" of the modern waste land is not an utterly hopeless state.

The need for regeneration is portrayed in "A Game of Chess" through concrete illustrations of upper and lower class marriages which are ritual only. In both cases, life for the individuals concerned has lost its meaning, yet allusions in the poem suggest the possibility of renewal. For example, in the passage concerning the upper class woman, the reference to the myth of Philomela reminds the reader of the metamorphosis possibility:





Above the antique mantel was displayed  
 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
 So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice.

There, in that world, her song gave meaning to her pain, but she does not sing in the present waste land, where lust triumphs.<sup>45</sup> This illustration from mythology provides a commentary on how the waste land became waste - for the violation of a woman is a symbol of secularization - and in so doing it stresses the idea that death is the door to life, for the raped Philomela is transformed through her suffering into a nightingale.<sup>46</sup> The theme of the life which is death is stated specifically when the woman in this passage asks the man, "Are you alive, or not?" and "Is there nothing in your head?"<sup>47</sup> But the protagonist again recalls a death that was not sterile and meaningless, for the reference to The Tempest gives a fleeting memory of a death that led to life, and of the life-giving symbol which means very little in a world where water means only "The hot water at ten" and "If it rains, a closed car at four."

Abortion is the key symbol in the portrayal of the lower class marriage, stressing the idea of potential life, but actual sterility. And the only significance of this abortion is that it spoiled the woman's looks. The good-nights of the group at the pub allude to Shakespeare's mad Ophelia, who endured death by drowning, but whose death was from self-destruction and frustrated love, and thus cannot suggest baptism and regeneration.<sup>48</sup>



Each of the women portrayed in "A Game of Chess" is the victim of an unsuccessful marriage, a marriage as mechanical as a game of chess. Their condition suggests the state of society as a whole, even as that of the Fisher King was paralleled in the waste condition of his lands. Yet since the Fisher King had hope for recovery, so we must assume that even for these women there is a possible new life. Eliot's vivid portrayal stresses that what they desperately need is love, which would end their sterile existence and give significance to their lives. Symbolically, their plight is that of the spiritually dead, and the poem therefore implies the universal need for regeneration through an encounter with redemptive love.

"The Fire Sermon" portrays sterility from lack of love through illustrations of sexual relationships outside of marriage, indicating that in marriage (as in "A Game of Chess") or outside it, sex without love leads to a negation of life. It is appropriate that the pictures here center around the Thames, a potential source of life, but polluted.

Once again a reference to The Tempest indicates that death does lead to life, for the protagonist identifies with Ferdinand in "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him," and the allusion emphasizes once more the contrast between those supposed deaths and the death-in-life of the waste land. For instead of Ariel's song luring Ferdinand towards Miranda, the horns of motors herald the loves of Sweeney and Mrs. Porter through a vulgar ballad, and in contrast comes the sound of children's voices singing the Grail ritual. This pure music - like that of Philomela -





cannot be sustained: to 'dirty ears' it also is vulgarized. Another example of the death-in-life existence of the waste land is implied through the "Unreal City" where fog distorts reality, and where the protagonist is invited by the one-eyed Mr. Eugenides to share a homosexual weekend.<sup>49</sup>

A further debasement of natural human love is indicated in the passage about the typist and the young man, for the girl portrays not passion, but utter boredom. In contrast to the title of this poem, and the later reference to Buddha's Fire Sermon, this is not the fire of lust, but rather complete indifference towards chastity. The scene may well be a parody of the fertility ritual spoken of by Frazer in which, in order to promote fertility, a girl had sexual relations with a stranger before marriage, and the act was accompanied by ritual feasting and music. Tiresias is introduced in the poem as the spectator of all this, and he too is completely bored by what he sees. Though a new life is possible for these individuals, the pathos is that they do not want it, and the scenes therefore are not tragic.

An optimistic tone emphasizing the possibility of regeneration results from the inclusion of another line from Ariel's song in The Tempest. "This music crept by me upon the waters" suggests the lines that follow it in Shakespeare's play: "Allaying both their fury and my passion / With its sweet air," and leads to the poet seeing the "Unreal City" not as a wasteland but as the center of a communal life, with its inhabitants not simply "a crowd walking round in a ring."



The rattle of the bones, the chuckle of the death's head, the sound of horns and motors and the mechanical gramophone fade into

The pleasant whining of a mandoline  
And a clatter and a chatter from within  
Where fishmen lounge at noon;

Under the shadow of a church, these fishmen have a corporate life, joined in a community and a harmony of work and relaxation.<sup>50</sup> In the songs of the river nymphs the present - the polluted Thames - is contrasted with the past, following which each of the three violated Thames daughters sings her pitiful story. Yet there is a marked difference between their concerned reaction to being violated, and that of the typist who is simply bored: the girl in the canoe knows she is 'undone'; the girl who paces the pavement at Moorgate has 'lost her self-respect' and the girl on Margate sands sits 'expecting nothing'.<sup>51</sup> Being aware of their guilt, and their need, places them, unlike the typist, in the position of being possibly "plucked out" of their desolate situation.

Allusions to Buddha's Fire Sermon and to St. Augustine indicate further the need and possibility of regeneration. Buddha in this sermon describes all things as burning, and thus the only refuge is to develop such an aversion for life that one becomes free of desire and 'knows that rebirth is exhausted'.<sup>52</sup> But Eliot couples this allusion with one to St. Augustine, and his own notes (Nos. 307-309) concerning these two representations of Eastern and Western asceticism clarify his intention. "O Lord Thou Pluckest me out," taken from St. Augustine's Confessions, implies that for the Fisher King, as for St. Augustine, and as for the three Thames daughters, when all human





hope is lost the real hope begins; for redemption from the waste land comes from outside it: from the knight who asks the question, or from the Christ who restores meaning and power to life.<sup>53</sup>

"Death by Water," in which Phlebas the Phoenician is presented as literally drowned, recalls the Tarot cards of Madame Sosostris and her warning to the protagonist. The poem has an ambiguity in that it may portray a drowning that is final, or symbolize a death leading to rebirth similar to that of the drowned god spoken of by James Frazer in The Golden Bough. This primitive rite called for an effigy of the god to be thrown into the river or the sea, and for his rebirth to be celebrated shortly thereafter when the effigy was removed. In view of the hints of possible new life in "The Fire Sermon" and of the usual significance of water imagery, it seems likely that the transformation in "Death by Water" is a stripping off of unreality ("A current . . . picked his bones in whispers") that is not unlike the eating by the leopards in "Ash Wednesday." Perhaps there is a change of human nature into 'something rich and strange', as Ariel promised in The Tempest, and as was realized in the regeneration of Alonso and his court through their suffering and repentance.<sup>54</sup> Certainly the "death by water" symbolizes also the rite of Christian baptism through which regeneration is effected, and recalls the words of St. Paul in Romans 6:4: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."





The final section of The Waste Land, which is based on the Grail Legend, the journey of Christ to Emmaus, and the present decay of Europe, is the most positive of the five in presenting the regeneration concept. Through these three "objective correlatives" and the three strokes of the thunder, the journey through the waste land is concluded and the reader is left with the sense of a slight progression, and a semblance of hope. Helen Gardner says the progress in The Waste Land is "not the progress of narrative, movement along a line, the progress of an Odysseus towards his home or of Bunyan's pilgrim from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City; it is like the progress of Langland in Piers Plowman - a deeper and deeper exploration of an original scene or theme."<sup>55</sup> The Waste Land, however, contains no "revelation of Power, Wisdom and Love in union" but discovers in its visions "man's incapacity to achieve satisfaction, the boredom of his quotidian existence, and the horror of his ignobility." Yet in spite of this mainly negative approach its ending is not despair: "The Waste Land ends with the truth of the human situation as the religious mind conceives it: the beginning of wisdom is fear."<sup>56</sup>

"What the Thunder Said" opens, fittingly, with an allusion to Gethsemane, but with the suggestion that death is not conquered: "He who was living is now dead," and therefore "We who were living are now dying." At this point there is no knowledge of the resurrection. This is the death-in-life of Dante's Limbo, and it is emphasized by the passage on the sterility of the waste land: "Here is no water but only rock." Related to the water imagery of this section is that of



the rock which is both "vague and terrifying" because its meaning is obscure.<sup>57</sup> Although it reminds one of Isaiah's vision: "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," this rock provides no comfort, and without water is intolerable:

If there were water  
 And no rock  
 If there were rock  
 And also water  
 And water  
 A spring  
 A pool among the rock  
 If there were the sound of water only  
 Not the cicada  
 And dry grass singing  
 But sound of water over a rock  
 Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees  
 Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop  
 But there is no water

The rock, in the Hebrew-Christian tradition, may stand for strength, absolute reliability, God-given reality, or even God Himself. Here in this poem, however, with the absence of lifegiving water the rock is more of a potential source of aid than an actual one; if it is to represent Christ, it is a Christ of judgment.<sup>58</sup> Only the combination of water with the rock would lead to spiritual regeneration, and the absence of water may well allude again to the protagonist's belief that "He who was living is now dead." For only a living Christ can effect spiritual renewal.

Even as the travellers long ago on the road to Emmaus did not recognize the risen Christ, so the protagonist in The Waste Land is prevented, through his blindness, from knowing that He is alive, and





that life may therefore come through death. Like the disciples, he believes that Christ is dead, not realizing that he "still walks half-seen on the other side."<sup>59</sup> Such unbelief, if persisted in, makes a new life impossible.

Following a portrayal of disintegrating, unreal, cities, which illustrates again the effect of personal unbelief on society, the protagonist nears the chapel. In the Grail legend, the knight had to keep a vigil in the Chapel Perilous with a dead body, perhaps to test his acceptance of the fact of physical death which is a reality the individuals in the waste land seek to evade. Thus in The Waste Land reaching the chapel marks a decisive stage in the spiritual journey, and "a damp gust bringing rain" indicates that even though no thrilling climax is reached, there is at least a sense of newness of life.<sup>60</sup> Heraldizing the "damp gust" is the voice of the cock, an ironic symbol reminiscent of the disciple who denied his Lord. The quester, too, has abandoned the Hanged Man, persisting in his belief that "He who was living is now dead," and has held back the longed-for rain.<sup>61</sup>

Although the three strokes of thunder announce a formula for a kind of rebirth - Give, Sympathize, Control - the protagonist cannot give assent to the commands. B. Rajan says that though the thunder's pronouncements leave one in what Eliot called a "state of enlightened mystification," this is not surprising, for "Oracles achieve validity rather than clarity, and what they mean is decided by how experience reads them. One strong note in the voice of this



oracle is a call to commitment. . . . The break-out from sterility is no more than that; it is not a movement into fruitfulness. . . . Its conclusion sets the arid plain behind and moves us to the fringe of a world which the poem can formulate but cannot enter. To make that entrance is the function of 'Ash Wednesday'."<sup>62</sup> When the protagonist decides to set his lands in order, this marks "the recovery of a traditional understanding."<sup>63</sup> It is noteworthy that now all trace of boredom has vanished: "Agony, patience, endurance and weariness are there, but no boredom." And surely this suggests that at last we are in touch with reality, and have reason to hope that rain - and new life - will follow the thunder. In any case, the decision of the protagonist at least marks a submission, and a willingness to endure the death of the old self in order to make possible the birth of the new.<sup>64</sup>

That the Christian concept of regeneration is alluded to clearly in the final stanza of the poem is supported in a study by Calvin Linton. He maintains that definite Christian themes begin in Eliot's early poetry, and calls The Waste Land "a vast and amazingly clear mosaic of Christian faith." To illustrate this claim, he refers to the three "fragments" at the end of the poem, and explains their significance. The first is a quotation from Dante's Purgatorio which describes the refining flame that consumes sin in the fire of God's righteousness; the second, from the medieval "Eve of St. Venus," and denotative of the supernatural transformation of Philomel, is also a marriage hymn, and the third is a fragment from De Nerval's





poem "El Desdichado," which speaks of disinheritance, a ruined heritage, and re-inheritance and reintegration. Thus the three fragments, which the speaker has shored against his ruins, suggest the "purging of sin, the divine transformation of the sinner, and the re-inheritance." Each relates to more central hints in The Waste Land, making its basic theme essentially Christian.<sup>65</sup>

Whether or not one interprets Eliot's early works in this distinct Christian manner or not, it is important to avoid putting them, and especially The Waste Land, into a "pre-Christian" category simply because they stress the need for regeneration more than the means. Amos Wilder makes this point when he says that The Waste Land and Murder in the Cathedral are both "saturated with Christian motives," and even The Waste Land could have been written by a converted Christian, or one on the brink of Christianity, because "Only those for whom the waste land of the world is without tears and imprecations are truly unbelievers."<sup>66</sup>

"The Hollow Men" has been called Eliot's most pessimistic poem, perhaps because he said the time of writing it marked "a point of spiritual aridity in my career."<sup>67</sup> Yet it is a poem that is spiritually revealing, and not without hints of possible renewal. For example, the final section of the poem may be interpreted as an attempt to pray, or an indication that the speaker finds prayer impossible, for the reference to the "whimper" is not necessarily the last gasp of life, but may just as well indicate "that first faint querulous sound which tells us that a child is born, and is alive."<sup>68</sup>





Images of drought and sterility, and a preoccupation with "death's dream kingdom," surely point to a desperate need for some kind of regeneration. And whether or not such a hope is held out in this poem depends largely on the meaning assigned to the word "empty" in the final two lines of Part IV: "The hope only / Of empty men." Friedrich W. Strothmann and Lawrence V. Ryan base their hopeful analysis of "The Hollow Men" on the claim that the word "empty" must not be assumed to be synonymous with "hollow" but rather taken in a sense that makes emptiness a desirable condition. This interpretation is based on the writings of St. John of the Cross, who uses the word "empty" in the sense of "receptive, capable of being filled." Emptiness, therefore, does not suggest that God has abandoned the individual, but rather that he has completely emptied himself of everything that is not God.<sup>69</sup> Several lines from St. John of the Cross explain this religious experience:

And with a flame so fine and fragrant  
Which now I feel in me completely  
Reduce my being, till no vagrant  
Vestige of my own self can stay.  
And wholly I am burned away.<sup>70</sup>

Such an interpretation of the poem illuminates the final section, where even the first stanza - "Here we go round the prickly pear," shows a more purposeful kind of behaviour than is exhibited in the earlier stanzas; furthermore, the use of nursery rhymes to open and close the section suggests this movement is that of children, "persons who have begun a new manner of existence." St. John of the Cross writes of men who have just been made empty and receptive, that



they "feel and experience God as little children."<sup>71</sup> In this poem, then, a beginning is made, though the road ahead through the desert is not easy. "The Shadow" may suggest that only "in death's other kingdom" may the beatific vision be fully attained, and death must come therefore between the first glimpse of reality and its ultimate realization. But redemption will be achieved finally by the hollow men if they empty themselves "of all that is not God" and journey through "the desert of purgation."<sup>71</sup> The poem, in this context, marks a bridge between The Waste Land and "Ash Wednesday."

In these selected poems representing Eliot's early career, it is surely evident that the idea of a personal regeneration experience is implicit. That the approach is primarily negative is indicative of the poet's personal indecisiveness at this time about a specific religious commitment, but is fitting also from an artistic point of view. For without an exploration and exposure of the rootlessness of modern man, and his need for renewal, the poetic portrayal of a solution would be largely ineffective. A unity is maintained throughout his career by the fact that the early works do contain "hints" of a new life, and the later works retain the idea of the need of modern man. The emphasis, however, changes gradually from a negative to a positive one.





### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE LATER POEMS

"Ash Wednesday," Eliot's most explicit Christian poem, was the first major work published after his conversion to Christianity. In it references to Christian experience are more obvious, and the overall tone more positive. This is true of the Ariel Poems and Four Quartets as well, though Christian terminology is not used in these works to the same extent. This chapter will demonstrate, therefore, not only an obvious continuity in Eliot's portrayal of the human condition and the need for renewal, but also will indicate a significant Christian emphasis that illustrates Eliot's "extended vision."

The redemption theme is developed in "Ash Wednesday" through an emphasis on various aspects of penitence and purgation. With this poem, Eliot begins to explore more closely than before the world of an individual's inner experience, and does so through an imagery that is perhaps less precise than in earlier poems, yet more beautiful and "poetically suggestive."<sup>1</sup> Although Eliot uses in this poem many terms from church liturgy and doctrine, he is not didactic in the sense of explaining Christian doctrine; rather he communicates the feeling of experiencing the faith.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps more than any of his poems, this one reveals Eliot's affinity to Dante, primarily through the role of the Lady, who may be compared with Beatrice in the Divine Comedy. Miss Cahill explains the role of Beatrice as follows:



. . . she is one of a chain of agents who bring about Dante's enlightenment and subsequent redemption. The first act of compassion belongs to the Virgin Mary, who, knowing of Dante's need, sends Lucy to Beatrice, who, in turn, enlists Virgil's aid to guide Dante through the regions of Hell and Purgatory which she may not enter herself. Matilda is sent to meet Dante in the Garden of Paradise and to prepare him for the momentous meeting with Beatrice. All these messengers, and others besides, are bearers of enlightenment and divine grace; allegorically, they symbolize the enlightenment and grace that they bear, and ultimately their role is the same: by loving communication to reveal to the sinner the love of God Himself, and by loving intercession to draw the penitent onward and upward until he is in the presence of God Himself. They represent the whole Church in her redemptive work in time and beyond time, for her redemptive work is done in just such a fashion, through just such encounters.<sup>3</sup>

Eliot, as was his usual manner, introduces his theme negatively in terms of man's resignation, or weariness of self, and his awareness of the need for confession of guilt before he can avail himself of redemption. The opening lines of the first poem in "Ash Wednesday" indicate a change of direction rather than an achievement, and imply that the human will is always capable of turning back to the temptation from which it has turned away.<sup>4</sup> In this poem, the turning is sometimes from unrighteousness to righteousness, from the world to God, or from past to present, but always with a certain ambiguity. Yet through the repetition of the word 'turn' and the idea of turning, the two worlds between which the poem moves are kept before us,<sup>5</sup> as is the possibility of personal change and progression. Because he has exiled himself too far, the penitent in this poem seems to have no hope of a return to his old life and loves; he no longer strives, and as a result is no longer tormented by regret: "Why should I mourn / The vanished power of the usual reign?"

By referring to the "aged eagle," Eliot alludes to the tradition that in its old age the eagle flies up into a circle of fire,





burns off its feathers, and falls blinded into a fountain of water from which it emerges as a young eagle once again.<sup>6</sup> St. John of the Cross refers to this tradition as a parable of spiritual regeneration, and Dante's dream in Purgatorio, IX, is a variation of the same myth.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the eagle reference recalls the Psalmist's words, "Thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's," and the fact that in the Middle Ages the rejuvenation of the aged eagle was the symbol of baptismal grace.<sup>8</sup> Therefore though the words may on one level be a mocking statement about poetic failure, they suggest also a kind of reluctance to embark on a journey that leads to rebirth.

Finally, however, the penitent achieves a kind of joy: "I rejoice that things are as they are," and finds he has lost not just the desire to return to the past but the ability, for his will is tired: ". . . these wings are no longer wings to fly / But merely vans to beat the air." By the three prayers in the final part of this poem, its full import is summarized: first, the protagonist prays for merciful judgment, "And pray to God to have mercy upon us / And I pray that I may forget"; second, he says, "Teach us to care and not to care / Teach us to sit still"; and third, he utters the prayer of invocation with which the poem closes, "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death."<sup>9</sup> When a penitent thus realizes the need of prayer for himself, he is well on his way to restoration, and this first poem of "Ash Wednesday", therefore, shows a definite progression in the activity of the will and the development of the soul.





Though the penitent's repentance is a personal matter, he is not alone in his spiritual struggle, and the second part of "Ash Wednesday" indicates through its references to the "Lady" the importance of the prayers of the Church on his behalf.<sup>10</sup> This recalls the Anglo-Catholic belief in the visible Church as the agency of God's grace, and in the need for the ministries of the Church in the redemption process.

The apocalyptic vision opening this poem suggests, in general, the life through death theme. While numerous explanations may illuminate the passage, there is danger in insisting on one specific interpretation rather than leaving the unique details to serve as a "potent and mysterious image."<sup>11</sup> Yet the general impression of life springing from death, through the cooperation of the will with the agents of dissolution, is of course intensified by remembering the story of Elijah sitting under a juniper tree, praying that he might die, and by the story in Ezekiel of the dry bones coming to life one by one. In the case of the leopards, however, it is their activity, and the protagonist's attitude toward them, that is important. Like "Christ the tiger" in "Gerontion," the leopards have "devoured all the springs of action of the self. . . . They seem to represent the purgative, purifying element in the conversion experience, while the Lady represents the revitalising, re-integrating force which makes the new life possible."<sup>12</sup>

In order that this new life may begin, the penitent must cooperate in a voluntary death. And even as life from a desert, or



from dry bones, is surely incredible, to the eyes of the world spiritual regeneration too is always incredible. But the new life, nonetheless, is real, for the bones sing a hymn of joy that is addressed to the Virgin, though it possibly is inspired by the other lady who "honours the Virgin in meditation":

Lady of silences  
Calm and distressed  
Torn and most whole  
Rose of memory  
Rose of forgetfulness  
Exhausted and life-giving  
Worried reposeful  
The single Rose  
Is now the Garden.

This song, which includes the first direct "rose" symbolism in Eliot, alludes to Dante, for at the end of his pilgrimage he finds the garden of Paradise to be the place "Where all loves end." Furthermore, it is at the point where the vision of the single Rose becomes the Garden, the Paradise, that Dante sees Beatrice, and she becomes "the saviour" and he the worshipper:<sup>13</sup>

O Lady, in whom my hope hath vigour, and who for my salvation  
didst endure to leave in Hell thy fountains;

of all the things which I have seen I recognize the grace and  
might, by thy power and by thine excellence.

Thou hast drawn me from a slave to liberty by all those paths, by  
all those methods by which thou hadst the power so to do.

Preserve thy munificence in me, so that my soul which thou hast  
made sound, may unloose it from the body, pleasing unto thee.

So did I pray, and she, so distant as she seemed, smiled and  
looked on me, then turned her to the eternal fountain.<sup>14</sup>

As a symbol, the rose has been identified with Christ, and also with the company of the saints. Taken in connection with the garden, it suggests renewed life, restoration and wholeness, for the restored penitent is placed "in the garden of the Lord, a member of a restored





community: he is given a part and a lot in the promised land."<sup>15</sup> And this has come as a result of the Lady, who represents the intercession of the Church.

Because the rose garden experience here referred to is, in Four Quartets, associated even more directly with the mystical "still point" experience, it is helpful to relate it at this time to the experience of ecstasy in childhood that Dante speaks of in the Vita Nuova, and that Eliot alludes to in "Dans Le Restaurant."<sup>16</sup> In his essay, "Dante," Eliot speaks of this as follows:

Now Dante, I believe, had experiences which seemed to him of some importance; not of importance because they had happened to him and because he, Dante Alighieri, was an important person who kept press-cutting bureaux busy, but important in themselves; and therefore they seemed to him to have some philosophical and impersonal value.

. . . . .  
In the first place, the type of sexual experience which Dante describes as occurring to him at the age of nine years is by no means impossible or unique. . . . it appears obvious that the Vita Nuova could only have been written around a personal experience.

. . . . .  
The attitude of Dante to the fundamental experience of the Vita Nuova can only be understood by accustoming ourselves to find meaning in final causes rather than in origins. It is not, I believe, meant as a description of what he consciously felt on his meeting with Beatrice, but rather as a description of what that meant on mature reflection upon it. The final cause is the attraction towards God.

. . . . .  
Let us entertain the theory that Dante, meditating on the astonishment of an experience at such an age, which on subsequent experience abolished or exceeded, found meanings in it which we should not be likely to find ourselves.<sup>17</sup>

Eliot apparently assumed the Vita Nuova was inspired by an experience of infantile sexuality, which influenced Dante's idea of love. Moreover, Eliot's persistent use of the rose garden experience seems to



follow in some respects the lines of Dante's experience in the sense of trying to establish a connection between human and Divine love.<sup>18</sup> The central element in most of his garden episodes is a "moment of ecstasy," in which a person reaches the "still point," and achieves an insight into reality. Because, for Eliot, the historical Incarnation represents the supreme meeting of Time and Eternity, and the perfect combination of human and divine love, these experiences symbolize effectively the truth of Christian redemption.

Although the third poem is less directly concerned with the redemption process than the preceding two, it does suggest yet another phase in the experience of a penitent soul. It concerns the temptations to self-absorption, self-disgust, and self-indulgence, which may undo the fixing of the will and destroy the peace that comes from surrender to God.<sup>19</sup> Effort and complexity in the forward journey, and not simply automatic progress, are implied by the stairs, and they symbolize as well what Leonard Unger calls a "posture of awareness" even as they did in "Prufrock." Both a step forward and a backward look are suggested by the turning of the first stair, whereas the second represents a higher stage with the struggles left behind, and the third a temptation to return to an earlier source of delight. Distractions rather than evil pleasures are the temptation, however, for the protagonist does get air and light from the open window near the third stair and moves on refreshed, with "strength beyond hope and despair."<sup>20</sup> Certainly a movement toward God is implied by the metaphor of the stairs which recalls the traditional idea used by Dante, St. John of the Cross





and other mystics who stated that renunciation should be followed by temptation and suffering during which a penitent makes progress even without realizing it. Most likely, these stairs allude directly to those mentioned in the last stage of Dante's journey, on his third day in Purgatory, when he passes through a wall of fire and begins to mount the rock-hewn staircase.<sup>21</sup> Falling asleep on one of the stairs, he dreams of "a lady, young and fair, going along a plain gathering flowers, and singing."<sup>22</sup> When he awakes, he is eager to move forward, finds strength to do so, and after reaching the top step wanders in the sacred wood until he meets Matilda.

In summary, then, one must realize that the most vital point about Eliot's stairs in "Ash Wednesday" is simply that they represent spiritual progress towards redemption. This idea leads naturally to the ending of this poem with its prayer of submission that echoes the words of the centurion to Christ in Matthew 8:8:

Lord, I am not worthy  
 Lord, I am not worthy  
                                   but speak the word only.

Since these words are almost identical to those said by the celebrant at Mass just before his communion, they effectively relate the protagonist's individual experience to the sacramental life of the Church, and suggest its part in individual regeneration.<sup>23</sup>

"Ash Wednesday" portrays next, in the fourth poem, the struggles of the penitent against temptation which tend to "undo the fixing of the will to the contemplation of the incarnate Word of God."<sup>24</sup> Eliot borrows the atmosphere and the imagery for this poem





from the Matilda passage in Canto XXVIII of Dante's Purgatorio, and a recognition of this helps the reader to identify the lady as the one leading the speaker to spiritual heights.<sup>25</sup> The following excerpts from the passage in Dante illustrate this:

Already my slow steps had carried me on so far within the ancient wood, that I could not see whence I had entered;  
and lo, a stream took from me further passage which, toward the left with its little waves, bent the grass which sprang forth on its bank.

All the waters which here are purest, would seem to have some mixture in them, compared with that, which hideth nought;

. . . . .  
and there to me appeared, even as on a sudden something appears which, through amazement, sets all other thought astray,

a lady solitary, who went along singing, and culling flower after flower, wherewith all her path was painted.<sup>26</sup>

In Eliot's poem, the protagonist recalls a springtime of woodland flowers and a summer made lovely by a loved presence, but the memories are not of a sensual kind, for the vision of the Lady gives the scene a kind of grace. Through her, the lost years are brought back, and as a result made capable of redemption.<sup>27</sup> The "silent sister" is the figure in white and blue who "talked of trivial things"; her silence is powerful, and her "sign" (perhaps that of the Cross) causes the Garden to spring into life:

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down  
Redeem the time.

Although the yew, as a churchyard tree, first suggests the inevitability of death, its long life symbolizes immortality - and thus spiritual regeneration as well; it is, as Sir Thomas Browne said, 'an embleme of Resurrection from its perpetual verdure.'<sup>28</sup>



In the final stanza of this poem the possibility of redemption becomes real, for time can be redeemed only by an act of repentance which re-directs the protagonist towards God and enables him to build upon the past - even upon failures. The last line - "And after this our exile" - is from a prayer addressed to the Virgin Mary, and its inclusion here indicates once again that the protagonist identifies himself closely with the rites of the Church, the agent of regeneration in the world.<sup>29</sup>

Regeneration is suggested in the fifth poem through references to the revelation of the Incarnate Word in the present world: "the silence of the Word is that of the speechless Babe and of the Christ who before his accusers 'opened not his mouth'." This passage fulfills hints from earlier parts of "Ash Wednesday"; for example, the 'speech without word and Word of no speech of Part II; 'Speak the word only' of Part III; and 'Spoke no word' of Part IV. Here, in Part V, the meaning is explicit:<sup>30</sup>

Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard  
The Word without a word, the Word within  
The world and for the world;  
And the light shone in darkness.

Why the Word has not been received, and why it has been lost to the world, is considered by the protagonist, who concludes that it is present in the world even if unrecognized, and, in fact, forms the center of the world:<sup>31</sup>

Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled  
About the centre of the silent Word.

The opening verses of the Gospel of St. John are reflected in the





first stanza of this poem, and the response "O my people, what have I done unto thee" alludes to the voice of God in Micah 6:3, "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" Man is being challenged by God to think about why the Word is rejected, and by the words "O my people" is reminded of the unique God-man relationship. Since the first fourteen verses of John's Gospel are read at the end of Mass, there is an allusion here both to the historical Incarnation, and to the sacramental and mystical Incarnation in the Eucharist and the Church; all are important in the regeneration of the penitent soul.<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, the widespread failure to hear the word that will give knowledge of the Word persists:

Where shall the word be found, where will the word  
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence  
. . . . .  
For those who walk in darkness  
Both in the day time and in the night time  
The right time and the right place are not here  
No place of grace for those who avoid the face  
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise  
and deny the voice.

In contrast to the "face" and "voice" mentioned in the first poem of "Ash Wednesday" ("I renounce the blessed face / And renounce the voice"), here there is no sacrificial renunciation, but only an avoidance and denial of these symbols of the spiritual.<sup>33</sup>

"Those who walk in darkness" are those who thus deny the spiritual, who are torn between spiritual and physical drives, yet are trying to make the final surrender:



Those who are torn on the horn between season and season,  
                   time and time, between  
 Hour and hour, word and word, power and power, those  
                   who wait  
 In darkness?

The "veiled sister" seems now to represent the Church in her spiritual function, and the plea for her prayers indicates the protagonist's admission of need. And the presentation of the garden and the desert together in the final lines suggests not an end to the protagonist's struggle, or to opposing forces, but rather a firm hope, and a possibility of reconciliation, even in the desert: "The ecstatic moments of spiritual experience are inseparable from the temptation, suffering, deprivation and surrender."<sup>34</sup> Fittingly, the poem closes with another reminder of the God-man relationship, for in spite of a general rejection of the Word and His redemption, and in spite of a wavering and disobedient will, mankind is addressed as "O my people."

The final poem in "Ash Wednesday" does not portray the completion of the penitent soul's journey, for the spiritual life is never ended. A sense of struggle remains, therefore, though the attitude of the protagonist is now one of acceptance and understanding. The lines "This is the time of tension between dying and birth / The place of solitude where three dreams cross" indicate regeneration because they are doubtless an allusion to Dante's three dreams in the Purgatorio, which correspond roughly to an entry into the penitential state, a temptation to leave his way and follow the siren of self-love, and a glimpse of the Active Life so ordered and dedica-





ted as to make possible the Contemplative Life. The tension is due to the awareness of these states, and "to the consciousness of the rival claims of both Heaven and Hell."<sup>35</sup>

The appearance of the yew trees again suggests both mortality and immortality, and the final prayer unites a number of significant symbols used throughout "Ash Wednesday": the veiled sister; the rocks; the fountain, river, and sea; and the garden. The redemption theme is seen on several levels, for the penitent's struggle, the tension between life and death of the self, and the polarity of the natural and the divine, all depict the conditions of estrangement, and the stages of reconciliation.<sup>36</sup> E. Duncan Jones says that there is in this sixth poem none of the "sense of painful constriction" seen in the first, but rather there is spaciousness: "the poet faces the sea. 'Even among these rocks' must suggest desolation, but the rocks derive from the sea: there is no hint of despair in the last poem, but a sense of complete dependence which issues in the final supplication."<sup>37</sup>

Teach us to sit still  
Even among these rocks,  
.....  
Suffer me not to be separated  
And let my cry come unto Thee.

Emphasized in this final prayer is the idea that it is God alone who can keep his followers true in spite of their wavering, and who can teach "the detachment and the submission that can make 'the time of tension' tolerable, and 'the place of solitude,' 'even among the rocks,' a place of blessing and growth." They need not be separated from Him, in whom is found spiritual regeneration.<sup>38</sup>





Helen Gardner says that of all Eliot's poems "Ash Wednesday" is "most at the mercy of the temperament and beliefs of the individual reader." This is so because one is very conscious of the author's presence, and the slight separation there is in the poem between his personal life and his mind.<sup>39</sup> Yet in spite of this admittedly personal element in the poem, coming as it does soon after Eliot's Christian conversion, it can, according to F. O. Matthiessen, be fully appreciated by readers who do not share its beliefs:

. . . though I do not share Eliot's belief in Anglo-Catholic dogma, by every test of word and rhythm, sense and sound, I receive a reiterated impression of the honesty with which 'Ash Wednesday' has faced the nature of actual human existence, and thus of its being a wholly authentic poem.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike "Ash Wednesday," Eliot's Ariel Poems are simple and much more objective, though embodying a similar theme. I propose to indicate the theme of regeneration as seen in "The Journey of the Magi" and "Marina" only, as representative of the emphasis in all four of these poems. Each follows the inner struggle of an individual, as does "Ash Wednesday," and later, Murder in the Cathedral, and each implies a rebirth out of death. In both "Journey of the Magi" and "Marina" Eliot examines spiritual progress from the point of view of the experiencer, whereas in Four Quartets he will examine a similar experience in a more detached manner.<sup>41</sup>

Like Eliot's early poems, "The Journey of the Magi" suggests death and rebirth, but instead of alluding to fertility myths from folklore Eliot uses the Christian Nativity story. After Christ's birth the wise men are "no longer at ease," for though they have encountered



the Incarnation, they know nothing of its significance and the speaker "is still part of that life which the Redeemer came to sweep away.

Like Gerontion, he cannot break loose from the past," and is thus content to submit to "another death" in the hope of achieving deliverance from his present life.<sup>42</sup>

It is significant that the arrival, finally, at the place of Christ's birth, is only "satisfactory." Though the narrator does not understand the feeling he has that in this birth there is a death, this is alluded to through the inclusion of a passage suggesting Gethsemane and Calvary:<sup>43</sup>

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky.

The three trees surely suggest the Crucifixion; the hands "dicing for pieces of silver" suggest the betrayal, and the entire scene not only is an interlude on the long journey, but reveals the kind of world into which this child is born.

The poem may be regarded also as an allegory of Christian conversion of "a particularly arduous kind. . . with very little effective awareness of any accompanying joy."<sup>44</sup> The primary concern of the poem is the response to the Birth, which was "Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death," and symbolizes a spiritual birth that is so painful it is hard to distinguish it from a spiritual death. The thought echoes St. Paul's statement in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Although in the poem







there is no suggestion of the "risen life" the experience of the speaker has been a valid one because his values have changed; he is "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation." His position is perhaps that "time of tension between dying and birth" spoken of in "Ash Wednesday," and he is, as one of the magi, a fitting symbol of this spiritual state because he may be said to have lived quite literally in "the time of tension between birth and dying" since he saw the old dispensation ended, and the fulfilment of God's promise to the Gentiles begun, but was not able to appreciate the full import of the new era. "I should be glad of another death" may suggest the speaker's desire for physical death to release him from the tension he is in; or it may allude to the death of Christ which will bring the complete revelation of the redemption plan begun through His birth.<sup>45</sup>

"Marina", unlike the other Ariel poems, gives a glimpse of grace, and symbolizes clearly the concept of regeneration. Helen Gardner calls this poem the bridge between "Ash Wednesday" and Four Quartets, even as "The Hollow Men" is the bridge between The Waste Land and "Ash Wednesday," for the latter, in spite of its explicit Christian terms and themes, is not as "penetrated with the Christian hope," and the "fulfilment of the promise 'Behold I make all things new'."<sup>46</sup>

Marina's restoration to her father is like a rebirth - not just for her, but for the old king himself. Images suggesting death are evoked in order to show that they are now, with Marina's reappearance,



. . . become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,  
 A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog  
 By this grace dissolved in place.

Although "grace" is the one explicit religious touch in "Marina,"<sup>47</sup> Eliot uses this reference to communicate a renewal experience that is symbolic of religious regeneration, for Marina represents the new life which will replace the old: "let me / Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken, / The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships." And the final lines suggest homecoming and familiar shores, giving the impression "of a soul that has discovered its true destiny."<sup>48</sup>

W. J. Barnes analyzes this poem from the standpoint of the speaker himself moving from a literal to a symbolic understanding of his own situation. He says that through the use of imagery Eliot emphasizes that "grace dissolved in place" is the center of the poem and is uppermost in the speaker's mind. Thus it is following this statement that he explores the meaning of that "presence," and then shifts from commenting on what he is seeing or touching to reflecting on what is not present to sense-experience yet suggested by it. Finally Pericles begins to establish the continuity of identity between the child he lost and the young woman before him, and in the fourth section he moves from the literal to the symbolic apprehension of his experience. The ship becomes a symbol for him - and for us - of his past life; it is later resigned for "new ships." And Marina as a dream dissolves into reality. At the spiritual level, this can represent "the realization that in one's past life there have always been present the seeds of regeneration, the potential for new life."<sup>49</sup>





Four Quartets embodies the greatest religious emphasis in Eliot's poetry, though it is not as filled with religious terms as is "Ash Wednesday." Eliot finds his material for a redemption theme primarily in Christian doctrine, but through the use of image and symbol rather than explicit reference to the New Testament. Maxwell says these poems differ from the earlier religious poetry "not so much by a change in the quality of their faith as by the more self-contained assurance of the communication, and the greater solidity of symbol."<sup>51</sup>

We might say that from "Prufrock" to the Four Quartets we have not a different view of human nature, but "an extended vision." In the early poems environment is of basic importance, and individuals are unable to find an answer for their own isolation; in The Waste Land the predicament of a society is revealed; in "Ash Wednesday" and the Ariel Poems the redemption experience is more explicit, and the tensions of the life of a Christian are recognized as part of man's predicament. .

The Four Quartets, however, may be viewed as the "reconciliation of these tensions" for in these poems there is an attempt "to synthesize experience and see life as a whole," and in this sense they provide the most complete expression of Christian regeneration. For example, there is the tension between the poet's experiences of a realm outside of time, and his ordinary life - between moments of mystic insight, and moments of darkness, but ultimately, all experiences are seen as part of a reality in which the temporal world is penetrated by the spiritual world, through the Incarnation:<sup>52</sup>





The principle of Incarnation is seen as a present reality, giving meaning to his knowledge and his ignorance, to his glimpses of beauty and his vision of evil. Every experience is now seen as a situation in which man is confronted by God; every human response, including the poet's response to his vocation to be a poet, becomes a response to God, in which man's faith is affirmed and his ultimate relationship deepened. Even what has hitherto seemed only evil becomes in this context a situation used by God to draw man to Himself; and in his vision of man's ultimate communion with God, the poet sees the promise of the final resolution of the human predicament.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of the religious nature of the poems, they are not narrowly dogmatic; this is partly because of the type of symbolism used, and partly because the mysticism of the poems is not explicitly Christian. The poems therefore have a universal appeal, though to the Christian reader his particular experience is of course most apparent. Yet the significant point is that the Four Quartets communicate, to a wide variety of people, in a unique manner. In writing about such "poetic communication," Helen Gardner says it is not the poet's task to make us believe what he believes, but rather to make us believe that he believes, and convince us that what he believes does interpret and make sense of our own experience.<sup>54</sup>

The idea of rebirth is closely associated, as in The Waste Land, with the four basic elements: earth in "East Coker"; water in "The Dry Salvages"; air in "Burnt Norton"; and fire in "Little Gidding." And against this world of flux is suggested the idea of eternity, or the timeless, for which the wheel metaphor, earlier referred to, is the most apt symbol. The rose-garden symbol, implied in the hyacinth garden experience of The Waste Land, and used in "Ash Wednesday," is referred to several times in Four Quartets to indicate a moment of spiritual insight, or a participation in Eternity.



An overall Christian interpretation of Four Quartets is given by Miss Gardner in her study of the poems. She says each of the four poems has a literal, a moral, and a mystical subject, and the mystical subject is Grace in "Burnt Norton," Atonement in "East Coker," Incarnation in "The Dry Salvages," and The Holy Spirit in "Little Gidding." Love, or Christ as the embodiment of Love, is the overall theme, and she concludes, therefore, that "mystically the subject of each poem and of the whole poem is Christ, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, Author and Finisher of our Faith."<sup>55</sup>

While this interpretation is valid, and helpful, it is important to remember that/the Four Quartets are not "theological poems" but rather "meditations upon the Christian understanding of Time and Eternity" that portray a "mystical apprehension of a unity beyond the contradictions of human history and experience."<sup>56</sup> To the Christian, of course, the supreme example of the meeting of Time and Eternity is the Incarnation, the basis of human redemption, and because of Eliot's own religious position this is the primary emphasis of my study.

"Burnt Norton" is the most complex, and most philosophical, of the four poems, and is, according to B. Rajan, concerned primarily with "establishing concepts."<sup>57</sup> One of these which is vitally related to the regeneration idea is the "still point," illustrated by the metaphor of the wheel which suggests not only the flux of human life, represented by the outer rim of the wheel, but the serenity of Divine Grace, or Eternity, represented by the still point in the center of the hub.<sup>58</sup> Through this symbol Eliot is able to discuss the two main







aspects of his philosophical and religious view of the world: "matter and spirit, the temporal and the eternal." The material world and the world of eternity are separated, yet related to each other, and the spokes suggest the way of the mystic leading up - or down - to the hub.<sup>59</sup> Apprehension of the "still point" is having a glimpse into Eternity that imparts a new dimension to life:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh  
nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the  
dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity.

As indicated in the discussion of The Waste Land, the wheel is an important image in Indian thought, but Eliot in Four Quartets adapts the cyclic view of history to allow for "the positive impulse of such events as the Incarnation of Christ."<sup>60</sup> Although the idea of an incarnate god is not unknown in Indian religious thought, it is not one unique event as in Christianity. In Indian thought, the wheel suggests the dualism of a philosophical system: its circumference is the material world; its hub is Brahman. Man's true Self is his Atman, which is eternal and is one with Brahman; as long as man is chained to the Wheel of Rebirth, however, he is not aware of his Self, but only of his temporal identity: "Indian mysticism . . . seems to have but one object in life: the penetration into the Self of man, to the timeless, which means the end of reincarnation. This penetration can take place at any moment in time; salvation is a perpetual possibility independent of any historical event."<sup>61</sup>

Elements of Platonic philosophy are apparent in the "Burnt Norton" wheel imagery also. In The Platonic Tradition in English



Religious Thought, W. R. Inge says the following concerning the spiritual life of the early Christian era: "The chief aim of mankind (it was now felt) is or should be to escape from the 'weary wheel' of earthly existence, and to find rest in the bosom of the Eternal." Like Indian philosophers, Plotinus stressed the need for peace of soul, and envisioned a divine ecstasy as an escape from the temporal to the timeless sphere. The 'Descent of the Soul' is the term used by Inge to describe Plotinus' idea of the soul's emanating from the One; thus, the Soul's 'homeward' journey to the One should be termed the 'Ascent of the Soul.'<sup>63</sup> Such an idea aids in an interpretation of Eliot's second epigraph from Heraclitus: "The way up and the way down are one and the same." And the same idea is suggested in Section II, in these words, "Neither movement from nor towards, / Neither ascent nor decline."<sup>64</sup>

At the still point is "the dance," which suggests a kind of unmoving motion, indicating that though the timeless is associated with stillness, it is not fixity. This relates to the neo-Platonic idea of the Eternal being immanent in the flux, as does the fact that the rose-garden represents a temporal experience yet symbolizes the mystical experience of the meeting with the Eternal.<sup>65</sup> Personal regeneration is inherent in this theme of Time and Eternity because of the possible union of the two, and the result of such a union.

The opening lines of "Burnt Norton," which speak of time and the possibility of its redemption, indicate that there is no possibility of escape from the deterministic and cyclic process:





Time present and time past  
 Are both perhaps present in time future,  
 And time future contained in time past.  
 If all time is eternally present  
 All time is unredeemable.

But then the venture into the "might-have-been" suggests a departure from temporal experience into something akin to the Eternal:

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
 Cannot bear very much reality.  
 Time past and time future  
 What might have been and what has been  
 Point to one end, which is always present.

Regeneration is symbolized by the garden because it is a place of life and growth similar to Dante's Earthly Paradise. The box circle is a center of life, and possibly the evergreens - the yew and the fir - are symbols of life that persists, unlike the rose, the year around.<sup>66</sup> The concrete pool may be similar to Eliot's bone imagery, and empty because "this life has been lost in the living."<sup>67</sup> Since the water comes "out of sunlight" and not from the earth, it is the water of spiritual life which quenches thirst eternally.<sup>68</sup> And the lotus, which is, in Hinduism and in some Chinese religions, an emblem of deities of fertility and love,<sup>69</sup> sometimes appears in Buddhist pictures at the hub of a wheel, "signifying the one secure ground of human self-sufficiency."<sup>70</sup> All of these symbols suggest a reality that does exist, and may be experienced, and the overall scene recalls the frequent garden imagery throughout Eliot's poetry and plays. Of the various Biblical gardens, the Garden of Gethsemane, where the Passion of Christ began, is the one most closely associated with those in Eliot. For Christ, in Gethsemane, experienced not only a struggle but a special insight into Eternity that enabled Him to say, "Not my will, but thine be done," and it is because





of this that man's redemption is possible. Furthermore, by associating the garden with the "still point" experience of apprehending reality, Eliot suggests the essentially mystical quality of the experience of regeneration.

The significance of the rose-garden experience is amplified in the second movement of the poem by the reference to the "still point of the turning world," which is not in time, but is a mystical experience or a moment of ecstasy":

both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood  
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
The resolution of its partial horror.

Through the experience, the protagonist appears to have discovered a new meaning or purpose in life. Yet even though there is a timelessness about the experience, it can only be appreciated and remembered "in time," emphasizing that "Only through time time is conquered."

In showing the hopelessness of man's condition, the following movement emphasizes the need for regeneration and recalls both the portrayal of the London subway in The Waste Land, and the descent into darkness described by St. John of the Cross. St. John speaks of the three stages of descent - the senses, intellect, and spirit - in his "Dark Night of the Soul," and the same experience is evident here:

Descend lower, descend only  
Into the world of perpetual solitude  
World not world, but that which is not world,  
Internal darkness, deprivation  
And destitution of all property,  
Desiccation of the world of sense,  
Evacuation of the world of fancy,  
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;



Though the section ends with the soul of the speaker in darkness, it is the type of darkness preceding mystic illumination.

The idea of descent into solitude is continued in the lyrical fourth movement, but here it is accompanied by the hope that earlier moments of mystic illumination will soon return. The reference to the yew tree, which is symbolic of both death and immortality, intensifies this hopeful tone, and the ending indicates a moment of insight which, though quickly over, is remembered:

After the kingfisher's wing  
Has answered light to light, and is silent,  
the light is still  
At the still point of the turning world.

The combination of the light image and the still point suggests the "timelessness of the hoped for illumination,"<sup>71</sup> and indicates that the lyric ends with an assertion of faith: "the vision of light must be trusted and taken as valid even when darkness falls, for it is from light that darkness derives its meaning."<sup>72</sup>

The concept of regeneration is alluded to only briefly in the final movement of "Burnt Norton." The first stanza, which pertains to art in its relation to time, compares words - which disintegrate - to the Word Incarnate, "attacked by voices of temptation": the one is subject to time, the other is in "the timeless dimension." Both, however, are subject to misunderstanding, misconstruction and perversity. And of all words, the one expressing the Incarnation of the Divine "Is most often attacked." What insight has been gained is in the final stanza which seeks to resolve the antithesis of time and eternity. For





example, the metaphor of the stairs expresses both the soul's aspiration toward God, and suggests a "synthesis of stillness and movement":

The detail of the pattern is movement,  
As in the figure of the ten stairs,  
Desire itself is movement  
Not in itself desirable;

References to the garden, the children, and the bird, recall the garden episode of the first section, and its implications. The final lines, "Ridiculous the waste sad time / Stretching before and after," may suggest that time is conquered by eternity,<sup>73</sup> for the "hidden laughter" is forever alive, and triumphs over "the waste sad time."

There is, as Eric Thompson points out, an inconclusiveness to "Burnt Norton" in the sense that Eliot admits the in-between nature of human experience, where we cannot really know absolute reality, but can only know it exists, and can point to it: "It operates in us, it operates us, but we are separated from it. Our only relief is to learn to become good pointers."<sup>74</sup> This supports the opinion of Miss Gardner that the poem's mystical theme is grace, which may be termed "the gift by which we seek to discover what we have already been shown."<sup>75</sup>

"Burnt Norton," then, points to a new life, in the sense of demonstrating the need of an intersection of Time by the Eternal, and in "pointing to" the possibility of reaching the "still point." The later poems aid in interpreting the "hints" of "Burnt Norton" because the association of the "still point" with the historical Incarnation becomes more explicit, and the portrayal of regeneration therefore more direct.



Whereas "Burnt Norton" is highly abstract, and deals primarily with the mind, and the state of timelessness, "East Coker" relates to present sense experience. Moving from "Burnt Norton" to "East Coker" is, therefore, a "birth into experience" which involves a "momentary loss of a prior state of innocence which can only be regained by devotion and submission to the will of God."<sup>76</sup> Thus this poem is more concerned with the response made to experience than is "Burnt Norton," and may properly be termed a poem of spiritual exploration or development.

The cycle of human life, and the decay which precedes rebirth, is suggested by the opening lines:

Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires.

And the repetition of the word "end" is significant in this poem which deals with history and with age, for Eliot explores the question of whether or not time proceeds towards an end in the sense of a goal, or towards an end in the sense of death and annihilation.<sup>77</sup> In so doing, he is exploring essentially the question of whether a spiritual regeneration is possible.

The unpredictable nature of human life, and the universal need for redemption, is implied in the next section by images of cosmic confusion that suggest a state of spiritual disturbance. While the normal cycle of seasons represents order and harmony, the unnatural represents a disordered spirit:





What is the late November doing  
 With the disturbance of the spring  
 And creatures of the summer heat  
 And snowdrops writhing under feet  
 And hollyhocks that aim too high  
 Red into grey and tumble down  
 Late roses filled with early snow?

Further results of spiritual disorder are portrayed through the images of war, and through the passage stating that experience does not bring the expected serenity and confidence:

Do not let me hear  
 Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,  
 Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,  
 Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.  
 The only wisdom we can hope to acquire  
 Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

Intense darkness, such as that in St. John's "Dark Night of the Soul," is portrayed in the third movement. This is a kind of spiritual death which has a tone of hopelessness, yet the very act of waiting generates hope. Accepting the darkness willingly, and waiting for deliverance, is the essential experience that must precede mystic illumination: "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you / Which shall be the darkness of God." The scenes from a theatre and an underground train, and the allusion to a patient under ether, all suggest a waiting experience, and recall Gerontion "waiting for rain." Although the lines which follow speak of waiting "without hope" and "without love," the speaker goes on to say that "there is yet faith" and this admission distinguishes his darkness from utter hopelessness. The paradox of mystical experience includes both:





So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness  
the dancing.

Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,  
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy  
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth.

In order to attain a revelation of God there is a painful "death" but it leads to life, or regeneration. Following this experience, the purpose of the "way of negation," and its paradoxical nature, becomes clearer:<sup>78</sup>

In order to arrive there,  
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not.

One can, and must, proceed from where one has no real existence, to where one does exist: there is no ecstasy along the way, for the way to light is a dark one and knowledge and possessions in the temporal life are not real. But this is the way self is obliterated, and the "still point" reached.<sup>79</sup>

The emphasis on the "downward way" leading to rebirth is an apt preface to a movement concerning the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. He is the supreme archetype of this experience, and the identification of man with Him in His death and resurrection constitutes the basis of Christian regeneration. The imagery of the poem recalls St. John of the Cross who wrote that "This soul is now, as it were, undergoing a cure, in order that it may regain its



health - its health being God Himself."<sup>80</sup> An explicit interpretation of the images is helpful, and it seems apparent that the "wounded surgeon" is Christ, who is working in the diseased world (the hospital), and who urges us to "obey the dying nurse," or follow the guidance of the Church, even if its function simply reminds us of "our, and Adam's curse." That Adam is the "ruined millionaire" is evident, for he once owned Paradise. In this poem, the illness and treatment leads to life, even as the sense of sin must be acute before forgiveness comes. Participation of the individual in the passion - and resurrection - of Christ is indicated by the direct reference to the Eucharist. "We call this Friday good" because it made redemption possible: "it is the anniversary of the Atonement . . . . Good Friday unites total darkness with total light."<sup>81</sup>

The final movement of "East Coker" concerns the vocation of the poet more than spiritual regeneration, yet his work also, like that of the struggling soul, is one of frequent beginnings and continual searching. He discovers, however, that the "intense moment" is part of a pattern of life:

Not the intense moment  
Isolated, with no before and after,  
But a lifetime burning in every moment  
And not the lifetime of one man only  
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

Even as "Old men ought to be explorers," so the poet finds that "each venture / Is a new beginning":

We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union, a deeper communion  
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,  
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters  
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.





The ending, appropriately, suggests a movement into a deeper communion with God, a going forward, made possible by the redemptive work of the "wounded surgeon." The speaker seems to have come to terms with life, and discovered that time does proceed toward an end in the sense of a goal, for life even in old age is only a beginning. "He has spiritually transcended the existential world through meditation - his inward, endless, quest. . . . His search leads him through the river of time, life, and history, and to the sea of eternity."<sup>82</sup> The reversal of the opening line to "In my end is my beginning" emphasizes the type of response made to experience for there is a recognition now of the purposive nature of life. It foreshadows the message of "The Dry Salvages."

The Incarnation, which made Christian redemption possible, is the main emphasis of "The Dry Salvages," and it is appropriate, therefore, that the poem opens with a reference to the two worlds of Time and Eternity which were joined in the Incarnation. These themes of time and timelessness are portrayed in this poem by the symbols of the "river of life" and the "sea of time," with the river representing man's temporal life from birth to death, and the sea representing boundless time.<sup>83</sup> While in "East Coker" Eliot presents the natural rhythm of life in harmony with nature, in "The Dry Salvages" he reveals the "deep and terrifying kinship between humanity and the incomprehensible, uncontrollable forces of nature," especially through the line, "The river is within us, the sea is all about us."<sup>84</sup> While this imagery recalls the water imagery of earlier works, which suggest the possibility of regeneration, the river here is a symbol of much



broader significance, for the words "untamed," "implacable," and "reminder / Of what men choose to forget" suggest that it also symbolizes dark forces in mankind and the onward movement of time. In "The Dry Salvages," therefore, it may symbolize "the 'inner' time of man and mankind, their sense of time and history, their halfconscious or unconscious memories of ages long past, or times when the river was not yet 'tamed'."<sup>85</sup> Thus this poem extends the meaning of "time" which was suggested in "East Coker" and in "Burnt Norton." Timelessness is suggested by the sea, where the journey of the river ends, because it is "all about us" and surrounds the scene of our existence; yet it is unfamiliar and even hostile to human life.<sup>86</sup> Its tolling bell

Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried  
Ground swell, a time  
Older than the time of chronometers,

suggesting it stands for a time "before Cosmos replaced Chaos."<sup>87</sup> The bell of the sea is the voice of Eternity heard in the world of time; it measures time, but it also speaks with the voice of annunciation<sup>88</sup> and may be regarded as both a warning and a summons - in either case demanding a response. Following as it does the phrase from the Anglican service ("that is and was from the beginning") it may be viewed as a call to prayer, and a commemoration of the mystery of the Incarnation, or a call to worship; yet like a tolling bell it is a reminder of death, and the Christian's duty to "die daily."<sup>89</sup>

River and sea imagery is extended in the second movement to include the idea of a voyage, with the sailor setting out to sea representing man's journey from birth to death. The voyages of the fishermen,





like the journeys of the explorers in "East Coker," suggest the human venture as a seemingly endless struggle, for they are in "a drifting boat with a slow leakage" and life seems to have lost its purpose. Only the "Prayer of the One Annunciation" can give it meaning again.<sup>90</sup> Significantly, the word "annunciation" appears as the last word in the first, third, and sixth stanzas of this movement: first, the "calamitous annunciation," which speaks of the perils of the sailor's life; then, the "bell of the last annunciation," which speaks of death; and finally, "the one Annunciation," the coming of Christ. Not only does the third encompass the first two, but it foreshadows the moment of intersection of time with the timeless in the Incarnation.<sup>91</sup> In the latter part of the movement the "annunciations" are related to "the sudden illumination," a moment when the temporal and eternal meet and give significance to life. Such moments also suggest the Incarnation which is the supreme meeting of the temporal and the eternal.

The final stanza symbolizes the spiritual in a different manner, for the image of the rock as "not merely a monument" but "always a seamark" and ever "what it always was" surely suggests the Church. This allusion, the extensive sea imagery, the "One Annunciation," and "the sudden illumination" combine to symbolize most effectively in this movement the various aspects of spiritual regeneration.

By quoting Krishna in the third movement of "The Dry Salvages" Eliot is suggesting that the present moment is the only reality, and detachment from the self and its future is the only means to another sphere of existence. He emphasizes the Hindu belief not as a sequence





of incarnations, but as the experience of rebirth in the present moment.<sup>92</sup> While the idea of life as a voyage on the sea of time is still prominent, the poet seems concerned now with the moral aspects of this voyage: "do not think of the fruit of action. / Fare forward."<sup>93</sup> Whether the voyages "come to port" or "suffer the trial and judgment of the sea" is unimportant; it is the quality of their detachment that counts:<sup>94</sup>

The mind of a man may be intent  
At the time of death - that is the one action  
(And the time of death is in every moment)  
Which shall fructify in the lives of others.

Eliot's introduction of oriental mysticism in the poem explicitly referring to the "one Annunciation" is interesting, and certainly emphasizes the universality of the "hints and guesses" given to all who seek God.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, Eliot may have wished to emphasize detachment, and a generalized view of incarnation, in a way he could not have done if he remained strictly within the Anglican tradition. Thus the emphasis of the movement is only indirectly related to Christian regeneration, but the emphasis on detachment and on general spiritual progress, is relevant.

The lyrical fourth movement, a prayer to the Virgin for those at sea, is another reminder of that point in history where eternity entered time, and of the Virgin's part in the redemptive activity.<sup>96</sup> At the first Annunciation, she was the one who received the "hint half guessed" and the "gift half understood," so the "perpetual angelus" suggests a prayer said, at the sound of a bell, in commemoration of the Incarnation."<sup>97</sup>



The final movement of "The Dry Salvages" opens with a list of substitutes for religion, means men use to try to escape from life or to find some kind of renewal. Yet these are not effective in leading a person to "apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time." Indeed, only the saint can do this fully, and it takes "a lifetime's death in love, Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender." Most people - who are not saints - experience only rare moments of illumination, yet there is comfort in the fact that this is possible:

For most of us, there is only the unattended  
Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Of the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses;

In fact, it is through the ordinary action of religious observance, the use of the rites of the Church: "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action," that men can find the "still point." What Eliot is suggesting in the last half of this movement is a "spiritual rebirth,"<sup>98</sup> for "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation," where "the impossible union / Of spheres of existence is actual." By prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action, the "hints and guesses" may be developed into significance. The Incarnation not only gives meaning to the individual human life, but to history:

Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled,  
Where action were otherwise movement  
. . . . .  
And right action is freedom  
From past and future also.  
For most of us, this is the aim  
Never here to be realized;  
Who are only undefeated  
Because we have gone on trying;





The final lines constitute a resolution of apparent opposites which are more fully developed in "Little Gidding":

We, content at the last  
If our temporal reversion nourish  
(Not too far from the yew-tree)  
The life of significant soil.

The yew-tree suggests both death and immortality, and the acceptance of the meaning of both leads to a "life of significant soil."

In "The Dry Salvages" Eliot presents a "central affirmation of the Christian faith,"<sup>99</sup> and the necessity of its rites to fully understand the Incarnation and personal redemption. In "Little Gidding," he returns to the implications of this affirmation in both the natural and the temporal order. The Incarnation has been accepted, and history is now seen not as just a sequence of events, nor as chaotic disorder, but as a pattern.<sup>100</sup> It is not necessary to know the entire sum of history, but only any one of its moments, for that one moment will contain the whole meaning, and in any moment man can find union with God:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

Because Little Gidding was the site of a seventeenth century spiritual community founded by Nicholas Ferrar, it immediately suggests an atmosphere of piety. Yet the allusion in Eliot's poem to the "broken king" (Charles I) who visited there suggests the idea of defeat also. This dual significance makes Little Gidding an appropriate setting for Eliot's culminating consideration of "time and eternity, appearance and reality, sin and grace."<sup>101</sup>



The theme of regeneration is suggested in the first movement, which outlines the speaker's journey to the chapel, through the idea that a spiritual awakening may come through the normal pattern of time. Place and time are significant only in the sense that they lead to "the intersection of the timeless moment."<sup>102</sup> Symbols that support the idea of a spiritual awakening are "pentecostal fire," and "midwinter spring," both of which imply an unexpected warmth that "stirs the dumb spirit." The image of fire and the dove both refer to the Holy Spirit, and thus emphasize spiritual development beyond the initial apprehension of the meaning of the Incarnation. Here, at the chapel of Little Gidding, one finds out its true meaning only by following the method of the mystics of time past:

You are not here to verify,  
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity  
Or carry report. You are here to kneel  
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more  
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation  
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice  
praying.

Through such prayer a person may attain communion with former mystics who have prayed here, and have now become part of eternity, and with them one can draw closer to the union with God symbolized by the pentecostal fire;<sup>103</sup>

And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead; the communication  
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language  
of the living.  
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment  
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

The "midwinter spring" of the first movement may well be considered in connection with the rose garden of "Burnt Norton" and





perhaps as its fulfilment; yet it is an altered fulfilment in the sense that Eliot has found the meaning of such experiences to be found within history, yet transcending history "extending into the world of eternal fire."<sup>104</sup> Both scenes offer "a brief intimation of transcendent reality," and use natural scenes to suggest the supernatural. Both passages are characterized by water, flower and light imagery, all of which may suggest "the brief and partial apprehension of God." In the rose garden, however, the protagonist recounts what "might have been" and not "what has been," and he has no understanding of his vision. In "Little Gidding" the meaning has been discovered, for the illumination takes place within the context of Christianity. The reference to "pentecostal fire" reminds us not only of the descent of the Holy Spirit, but of the holiness of God (Exodus 3:2), purgation (Isaiah 6:6,7), the inspiration of God (Psalm 39:3), the baptism by the Spirit (Luke 3:16) and God's power (Acts 2:4). The fact that this experience is set in midwinter recalls the paradox of "East Coker," II:<sup>105</sup>

If to be warmed, then I must freeze  
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires  
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

The second movement describes the death of the four elements - air, earth, water and fire - and is appropriately followed by a scene suggesting the air raids over London. The reason for the annihilation of the elements is given in the third stanza:

The marred foundations we forgot,  
Of sanctuary and choir,  
This is the death of water and fire.

And the allusion to the bombed ruins of London probably constitutes



Eliot's view that the war is a judgment on a civilization that has lost sight of "sanctuary and choir," and its need for spiritual renewal.

The poet's conversation with "some dead master" points to his personal need for restoration by purgatorial fire:

Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains,  
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit  
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire  
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.  
The day was breaking. In the disfigured street  
He left me, with a kind of valediction,  
And faded on the blowing of the horn.

The "dancer" may be an allusion to the dance at the "still point" in "Burnt Norton," and thus suggest that this point may be apprehended through a willing submission to the "refining fire." This idea recalls Dante also, and Eliot's essay concerning him:<sup>106</sup>

In purgatory the torment of flame is deliberately and consciously accepted by the penitent. . . . The souls in purgatory suffer because they wish to suffer, for purgation. And observe that they suffer more actively and keenly, being souls preparing for blessedness, than Virgil suffers in eternal limbo. In their suffering is hope, in the Anaesthesia of Virgil is hopelessness; that is the difference.<sup>107</sup>

Submission of his will is here indicated as the most vital factor in the poet's redemption of himself, his life and work.<sup>108</sup>

After a discussion of memory and its liberating function, Eliot considers in the next movement the existence of evil in the world, and why God allows this. The subject is first introduced through a quotation from Dame Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth-century mystic who wrote about sixteen mystical experiences in which the nature of the love of God was revealed to her. In the thirteenth revelation, she questioned God's purpose in permitting sin, and was answered as follows:





Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel & al shal be wel and  
al manner of thyne shal be wele.<sup>109</sup>

By using this statement, Eliot suggests that the existence of sin and evil is part of the divine order, and that all such experience, even what seems evil, may be useful in the spiritual growth of a soul.<sup>110</sup> Towards the end of the movement, he repeats the lines again, apparently as a promise for the future. And because the existence of evil is the reason for man's guilt and his need of regeneration, this promise that "all shall be well" indicates clearly that provision has been made for man's condition. The Church calls this provision redemption.

The fourth movement, a hymn to the Holy Spirit, is an exposition of the mysterious affirmation that "All shall be well," because of its central truth that God is Love.<sup>111</sup> It emphasizes that Eliot believed firmly in accepting both "the pains and comforts of the Christian religion,"<sup>112</sup> for its forceful tone stresses the "fierceness of the pentecostal experience" and the consuming power of love. The image of the dove recalls the baptism of Christ, when the Holy Spirit descended in this form; the flame and tongues recall the Day of Pentecost. On another level, the first lines of the hymn suggest German bombers descending over London, bringing what seemed a hell on earth, but at the same time indicating that even this must be regarded as purgatorial fire:

The only hope, or else despair  
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre -  
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Love is the key word of the hymn, and its basic thought is that one has the choice between the fire of destructive lust, or the fire of Divine Love, which, though it may involve purgation, leads to spiritual



regeneration:<sup>113</sup>

We only live, only suspire  
Consumed by either fire or fire.

The final movement of "Little Gidding" sums up this poem and Four Quartets as a whole. The first part relates not only to the theme of death and rebirth, but to the problems of art, the "timeless moments" earlier depicted through the rose garden, the scene in "mid-winter spring," and the chapel. The insight gained is expressed in the lines:

The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree  
Are of equal duration. A people without history  
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails  
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
History is now and England.

That is, the moment of mystic ecstasy that occurs in ordinary life ("the moment of the rose") and the moment of death ("The yew tree") are both beyond duration in the temporal sense, for even the yew tree seemingly lives forever. While the moment in the garden appears without past and future, that in the chapel of Little Gidding is related to time and history and 'significant soil'.<sup>114</sup> The isolated line, "With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling," recognizes the pervading Divine purpose through the pattern of history, and leads naturally to the final paragraph of the poem. It is because of the Love and the Calling, that

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

In "The Dry Salvages" the idea of exploration was toward a goal, and here the thought is that the innocence of a beginning (the rose garden





of "Burnt Norton") is restored in the perfection of the experience of "Little Gidding." The reconciliation glimpsed in "Burnt Norton" is now achieved, but the "condition of complete simplicity" costs "not less than everything."<sup>115</sup>

Significant symbols of the redemption theme from throughout the Quartets are gathered together in this final paragraph: the opening variation on the theme of beginning and end is from "East Coker"; the gate leading into the rose garden recalls "Burnt Norton" I; the river and the waterfall recall "The Dry Salvages" I and V, and the lines that follow this reference echo "Burnt Norton" I and V, and "The Dry Salvages" II.<sup>116</sup> In the final lines the images of the rose and the fire recur, and a new image of the "crowned knot of fire." All of these suggest the timeless, mystic, vision, and, along with the repeated affirmation that "All shall be well," point to Divine Love:

all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.

Everything will be well, when all is united in love, and the union of the rose - symbol both of natural beauty and of mystical insight - with the fire which is "torment to the self-loving, purgation to the penitent, and ecstasy to the blessed," effectively unites mortal and immortal life, Time and Eternity.<sup>117</sup>

Although the treatment of regeneration in these later poems is characterized by references to both Christianity and oriental mysticism,



thus giving them a universal appeal both artistically and philosophically, the tone and implications remain essentially Christian. This is demonstrated through the choice of allusion and the manner in which symbols are related to explicit Christian terms. While it is true that Four Quartets, though perhaps more thoroughly Christian than the other later poems, is less obviously so, this is because the mystical and philosophical themes are generalized to an extent not possible, or even desirable, in "Ash Wednesday." Yet these poems must be considered in connection with Eliot's other poetry, and in the context of his own religious viewpoint. When this is done, the regeneration experience is seen to be vitally dependent on the Atonement symbolized in "East Coker," and on the one unique Incarnation spoken of in "The Dry Salvages, through which the "saints," as well as "most of us," may find that "the impossible union / Of spheres of existence is actual."





## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PLAYS

Eliot's drama reveals, as do his poems, a keen awareness of the spiritual need of man, and this is depicted primarily through a central character who is isolated from reality and struggling to find himself, and the meaning of life. In Christian terms, the type of reality being sought is God, and finding this is regeneration. The experience is portrayed in the plays by means of symbols already noted in the poetry - the rose garden, the still point, and the wheel, each of which refers to an insight into, or a union with, the Eternal.

The Rock, completed and produced in 1934, is a pageant written to raise money for new London churches and was largely prepared, apart from the Choruses, by E. Martin Browne, who produced all of Eliot's later plays. The action involves the problems of bricklayers who are building a church in London and are hindered during construction by obstacles intended to represent the attitudes of the secular world towards the Church. These problems are paralleled by scenes dramatizing the opposition to the Church, from the conversion of the Saxons by Mellitus to the final consecration of the church then being constructed. Although the most apparent theme in the pageant is the reasons modern man does not attend church, in a deeper sense it concerns the perpetual struggle between evil and good, between the world where men are in isolation from each other, and the Church, where men



live in community. Images signifying futile motion, emptiness, violence, bestiality, darkness and waste portray vividly the condition of modern man, or of any people who live for material concerns alone.<sup>1</sup> The following words, spoken by The Rock, emphasize this point:

In all of my years, one thing does not change.  
 However you disguise it, this thing does not change:  
 The perpetual struggle of Good and Evil.  
 Forgetful, you neglect your shrines and churches;  
 The men you are in these times deride  
 What has been done of good, you find explanations  
 To satisfy the rational and enlightened mind.  
 Second, you neglect and belittle the desert.  
 The desert is not remote in southern tropics,  
 The desert is not only around the corner,  
 The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,  
 The desert is in the heart of your brother.

Wasteland imagery is evident also in the words of the 2nd Male Voice, in Section III:

A Cry from the North, from the West and from the South  
 Whence thousands travel daily to the timekept City;  
 Where my Word is unspoken,  
 In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels  
 The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,  
 The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,  
 And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent godless people:  
 Their only monument the asphalt road  
 And a thousand lost golf balls.'

In the pageant, the hooded figure of The Rock represents the Church, the eternal witness, in contrast to the Chorus which represents the church in action. The Rock, dramatically, supports the chorus by putting its commentary on the events witnessed in the framework of the eternal and ever-continuing struggles of the church.<sup>2</sup>

The Rock does not suggest a merely negative way of sanctity as an answer to the waste land condition of modern man; rather it shows a positive philosophy of using time rather than escaping from it.





This is implied by the wheel symbolism in the Choruses, for the focus is upon the life of the wheel as the means to attain the still point rather than "neglecting the wheel. . . for the sake of a more immediate communion."<sup>3</sup> Such wheel imagery suggests the world of flux, but this is to be understood in association with the hub, or "still point":

Both aspects are referred to in the following chorus:

O perpetual revolution of configured stars  
 O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
 O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!  
 The endless cycle of idea and action,  
 Endless invention, endless experiment,  
 Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
 Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
 Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.

The Chorus which begins with a paraphrase of the Genesis creation story links The Rock closely with Four Quartets, and especially "Burnt Norton," because of the emphasis on the "moment in time and of time":

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment  
     in time and of time,  
 A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call  
     history: transecting, bisecting the world of time,  
     a moment in time but not like a moment of time,  
 A moment in time but time was made through that moment:  
     for without the meaning there is no time, and  
     that moment of time gave the meaning.  
 Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light,  
     in the light of the Word,  
 Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their  
     negative being:  
 Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always  
     before, selfish and purblind as ever before,  
 Yet always struggling, always reaffirming, always  
     resuming their march on the way that was lit by  
     the light;  
 Often halting, loitering, straying, delaying, returning,  
     yet following no other way.

The allusions here to the Incarnation, the historical meeting of Eternity and Time, suggest the eternal presence of God in every moment,



and thus the possibility of achieving communion with God. Through relating his life in Time to Eternity, by placing his abilities and gifts at the service of the Church, the ordinary person may attain this communion:

Lord, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?  
 Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers  
 For life, for dignity, grace and order,  
 And intellectual pleasures of the senses?  
 The Lord who created must wish us to create  
 And employ our creation again in His service  
 Which is already His service in creating.  
 For Man is joined spirit and body,  
 And therefore must serve as spirit and body.  
 Visible and invisible, two worlds meet in Man;  
 Visible and invisible must meet in His Temple;  
 You must not deny the body.

This emphasis throughout The Rock on the visible Church, and its saving function, as the answer to the "waste and void" condition of man, is in accord with Eliot's personal belief that regeneration comes through identification with the Christian Church and participation in its sacraments and services. The final Chorus sums up this conviction:

We thank Thee for the lights that we have kindled,  
 The light of altar and of sanctuary;  
 Small lights of those who meditate at midnight  
 And lights directed through the coloured panes of windows  
 And lights reflected from the polished stone,  
 The gilded carvenwood, the coloured fresco,  
 Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward  
 And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.  
 We see the light but see not whence it comes.  
 O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!

Murder in the Cathedral portrays regeneration through relating the "timeless moment," or the "still point," to Beckett's death, for at this precise moment the contact of the temporal with the eternal is analogous to the moment in the rose-garden of "Burnt Norton."<sup>4</sup> The audience, however, is made conscious of the worlds of Time and Eternity





from the beginning of the play; for example, the third priest, speaking of the Archbishop's return, says:

For good or ill, let the wheel turn.  
The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.  
For ill or good, let the wheel turn.

Thomas, speaking to the priests who rebuked the women for warning him of danger, says:

They speak better than they know, and beyond your  
understanding.  
They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.  
They know and do not know, that action is suffering  
And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer  
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed  
In an eternal action, an eternal patience  
To which all must consent that it may be willed  
And which all must suffer that they may will it,  
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action  
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still  
Be forever still.

The fourth tempter repeats almost the identical words to Beckett, emphasizing the idea that the eternal action of God is willed by God, but also willed by men. And the Time and Eternity theme is especially explicit in the words Beckett speaks to the priests in commanding them to unbar the cathedral doors:

It is not in time that my death shall be known;  
It is out of time that my decision is taken  
If you call that decision  
To which my whole being gives entire consent.

Murder in the Cathedral, which was written to commemorate the death of Beckett, should be regarded as a passion-play rather than a tragedy, because the experience of Beckett parallels in significant respects the passion of Christ. The first part is analogous to the life and ministry of Christ, and the second to his death and resurrection. For example, the opening chorus by the women suggests the



season of the birth of Christ:

The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming.  
 Who has stretched out his hand to the fire and  
 remembered the Saints at All Hallows,  
 . . . . .  
 Come, happy December, who shall observe you, who  
 shall preserve you?  
 Shall the Son of Man be born again in the litter of scorn?

And the entrance of the Archbishop recalls the triumphal entry of  
 Christ into Jerusalem:

He comes in pride and sorrow, affirming all his claims,  
 Assured, beyond doubt, of the devotion of his people,  
 Who receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm,  
 Lining the road and throwing down their capes,  
 Strewing the way with leaves and late flowers of the season.

The temptations, in a general sense, recall those of Christ, though  
 it is only the fourth, which has no parallel in the Saviour's wilder-  
 ness experience, that causes Thomas a spiritual struggle.

Beckett's fate parallels the resurrection because it may  
 be regarded, as he himself stated, as taking place "out of time,"  
 and is a miracle rather than simply an heroic act.<sup>5</sup> Thus in him we  
 have not only an illustration of the meeting of Time and Eternity,  
 but a re-enactment of the passion story.

The sermon is a key part of the play for it not only serves  
 as an explanation of the mystery of redemption, but indicates that  
 Thomas did achieve victory over the subtle fourth temptation. He  
 says concerning martyrdom:

It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has  
 become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will  
 of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even  
 the glory of being a martyr.

Because of his inner victory, the latter part of the play is more





concerned with the effect of the "act of redemption" on the masses of people who depend on him still for spiritual guidance. Eliot thus "moves from a study of martyrdom . . . to illustrate the way the self-sacrifice of the spiritually elect fertilizes the lives of ordinary people and makes possible a fruitful communal life."<sup>6</sup>

The Chorus, which represents "most of us" undergoes spiritual enlightenment throughout the course of the play, but the change becomes apparent only after the death of Beckett. These women have moved from a fear of spiritual realities: "Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons," to an acceptance of the martyrdom and its significance: "Therefore, O God, we thank Thee / Who has given such blessing to Canterbury." Death is no longer simply an end, but rather embodies a renewing power. The women, and the priests, represent the "wheel" of human life, and Thomas the hub, or still point. Both the women and the priests come to apprehend something of the "intersection of the timeless in a moment of time," because they willingly involve themselves in Beckett's suffering. While the Te Deum is being sung, the women's exultant chorus is in marked contrast to their fearful expression at the beginning of the play. Even the priests are renewed, as indicated by the following words:

First Priest: O my lord,  
The glory of whose new state is hidden from us,  
Pray for us of your charity.

Second Priest: Now in the sight of God  
Conjoined with us all the saints and martyrs gone  
before you,  
Remember us.

Third Priest: Let our thanks ascend  
To God, who has given us another Saint in Canterbury.



The effect of Becket's death on these people indicates that the martyrdom helped to maintain in the world the standard of Christian values he represented: ". . . the power of St. Thomas is felt both in time and out of time. For those who can respond to his demonstration of faith, 'the communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living', ('Little Gidding')." <sup>7</sup>

Eliot's careful choice of imagery intensifies the portrayal of the renewal of the people of Canterbury. At the beginning, the Chorus complains about the Archbishop's return because a comfortable life will be upset:

Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons:  
 Winter shall come bringing death from the sea,  
 Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,  
 Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,  
 Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams  
 And the poor shall wait for another decaying October.

Despite their dependence upon the earth for life, they are out of sympathy with the normal seasonal pattern and with nature. They see "Death in the rose," and the seasons are "A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest," with comfort only in the dead winter - a vivid reminder of "April is the cruelest month." (The Waste Land) Yet in the final chorus, these same women are aware that the animals and the created world

affirm Thee in living; all things affirm Thee in living;  
 the bird in the air, both the hawk and the finch; the  
 beast on the earth, both the wolf and the lamb; the worm  
 in the soil and the worm in the belly.

And with this new attitude toward the natural world comes a spiritual attitude that no longer fears but welcomes spiritual renewal. The martyrdom of Thomas has created "significant soil" and "From such ground springs that which forever renews the earth."





The Family Reunion portrays the spiritual awakening and rebirth of Harry; unlike Murder in the Cathedral, the Chorus remains static throughout and the play centers around the hero. Helen Gardner says this play attempts to present what "Ash Wednesday" took for granted: "the discovery in experience of a meaning which re-integrates the whole personality, and changes the direction of the will."<sup>8</sup> Unlike the two plays just discussed, Eliot in this and subsequent plays tries to confront the public with the importance of the Christian faith without using Christian terms and as a result is able to begin at the point where the decay of faith has placed modern man.<sup>9</sup>

The Family Reunion has a modern setting of English aristocratic life, and concerns the return of a young nobleman, Harry, to the home of his widowed mother who wishes him to take up his duties as the head of the family. Harry is tormented by doubts and fears which are personified for him - and for his chauffeur and for the audience - as the Eumenides or Furies which pursue him. He either has murdered, or thinks he has murdered, his wife, and is pursued even as Orestes was pursued after he murdered his mother, Clytemnestra. Ultimately Harry begins to understand that the Eumenides are instruments of purification.<sup>10</sup> The use of the Orestes myth and the ritual in it adds coherence and meaning to the play, and Eliot doubtless intended the effect to be the portrayal of a modern counterpart to the universal experience of purgation.<sup>11</sup>

The spiritual need of the people on stage as the play opens is soon evident for all are revealed as those who are separated from



reality either because they have not found it, or have refused to face it. Harry says to them when he returns:

You are all people  
To whom nothing has happened, at most a continual  
    impact  
Of external events. You have gone through life in sleep,  
Never woken to the nightmare. I tell you, life  
    would be unendurable  
If you were wide awake.

Yet Harry himself at this stage is not "wide awake." Eliot relates the degree of separation from reality of the various characters to their perception of the Eumenides who pursue Harry. As Harry is gradually liberated by coming to realize and admit the nature of his problem, he perceives them more distinctly. Agatha, Mary, and Downing are all on a higher level of spiritual understanding than the other characters for they see the Eumenides also, and thus though they do not reach "the ultimate vision" they aid Harry in doing so. While Mary gives him the first glimpse of the type of regeneration that is possible, she cannot take him "to the door of the rose-garden," as does Agatha.<sup>12</sup> But she does help him to recall his early life realistically:

I am not a wise person,  
And in the ordinary sense I don't know you very well,  
Although I remember you better than you think,  
And what is the real you.  
.....  
                                    You attach yourself to loathing  
As others do to loving; an infatuation  
That's wrong, a good that's misdirected.  
.....  
Pain is the opposite of joy  
But joy is a kind of pain  
I believe the moment of birth  
Is when we have knowledge of death





I believe the season of birth  
 Is the season of sacrifice  
 For the tree and the beast, and the fish  
 Thrashing itself upstream;  
 And what of the terrified spirit  
 Compelled to be reborn  
 To rise toward the violent sun  
 Wet wings into the rain cloud  
 Harefoot over the moon?

And Harry replies:

You bring me news  
 Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor  
 Sunlight and singing; when I had felt sure  
 That every corridor only led to another,  
 Or to a blank wall.

As a result of Mary's aid, he is able to say when the Eumenides return, "I must face them. I must fight them."

Downing, who admits to Agatha that he has seen the Eumenides, is revealed as another who understands Harry and guides him in his search for a new life. To Mary, he says:

I think I understand his Lordship better than anybody;  
 And I have a kind of feeling that his Lordship won't need me  
 Very long now. I can't give you any reasons.  
 . . . . .  
 But with people like him, there's something inside them  
 That accounts for what happens to them. You get a feeling  
 of it.  
 . . . . .  
 And that's why I say now, I have a feeling  
 That he won't want me long, and he won't want anybody.

It is Agatha, however, who brings Harry to the point of illumination. He learns from her that she and his father discovered their love for one another on a summer's day in "a present moment of pointed light." His father had planned to murder his wife, but Agatha stopped him, because Amy was expecting a child - Harry. It seems that Harry now realizes his own dreams about killing his wife



are simply phantoms plaguing him as a result of his father's desires, and his own desires as well. Agatha suggests to him that through his own path of purgation he is to symbolize the redemption of his family from its curse:

It is possible  
You are the consciousness of your unhappy family,  
Its bird sent flying through the purgatorial flame.  
Indeed it is possible.

And Harry senses an unexplainable release:

Look, I do not know why,  
I feel happy for a moment, as if I had come home.  
It is quite irrational, but now  
I feel quite happy, as if happiness  
Did not consist in getting what one wanted  
Or in getting rid of what can't be got rid of  
But in a different vision. This is like an end.

Agatha adds, "And a beginning," and thus recalls to the reader the rebirth reference of "East Coker." That this illumination did lead to Harry's "rebirth" is indicated by his words to Agatha just prior to Amy's entrance:

I know that I have made a decision  
In a moment of clarity, and now I feel dull again.  
I only know that I made a decision  
Which your words echo. I am still befouled,  
But I know there is only one way out of defilement -  
Which leads in the end to reconciliation.  
And I know that I must go.

Harry has come to this point through realizing, and accepting, the meaning of the Eumenides' visit, and by connecting their appearance with Agatha's words that one finds relief not through rejection but acceptance, with which comes illumination, or "the moment in the rose-garden."





Harry's statement, "I know that I must go" no longer suggests simply a flight from reality, but a pilgrimage of penance that is an essential part of his redemption experience. Because the time of year is near Holy Week, his struggle suggests the idea of suffering that leads to new life.<sup>13</sup> Harry has discovered that in his predicament, which is that he must atone not only for his own sins, but for the sin of his father (representing original sin), he needs the resolution offered by Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Wishwood now represents a kind of Chapel Perilous where by asking the right questions Harry has learned that from death can come new life. While in the original Chapel Perilous the lights of the chapel are gradually put out during the knight's vigil, here the putting out of the candles on Amy's cake is performed as a similar kind of ritual.<sup>15</sup> Amy's day of birth has become her day of death, while in a significant sense the opposite is true of Harry, though the audience never knows precisely what his new life involves. Eliot criticizes his play in this connection, in Poetry and Drama:

A more serious evidence is that we are left in a divided frame of mind, not knowing whether to consider the play the tragedy of the mother or the salvation of the son. The two situations are not reconciled. I find a confirmation of this in the fact that my sympathies now have come to be all with the mother . . . who seems to me, except perhaps for the chauffeur, the only complete human being in the play; and my hero now strikes me as an insufferable prig.<sup>16</sup>

Yet Agatha's words about Harry are significant in indicating that he has achieved a new type of life:

Here the danger, here the death, here, not elsewhere;  
Elsewhere no doubt is agony, renunciation,  
But birth and life. Harry has crossed the frontier  
Beyond which safety and danger have a different meaning.  
And he cannot return.

. . . . .



But Harry has been led across the frontier; he must follow;  
 For him the death is now only on this side,  
 For him, danger and safety have another meaning.

And her words imply that his particular calling is "to do for a purpose what many have had to do without knowing why: endure loneliness, separation, and suffering."<sup>17</sup> Harry has been able to acknowledge the existence of original sin and sees the Eumenides not as Furies but as 'the bright Angels'. He departs then for the redemption of himself, and the departed.

The plot of The Cocktail Party is based on the Alcestis story of Greek myth, in which Alcestis went to Hades as a substitute for her husband, and Heracles brought her back again. This myth provides a pattern for the theme of renewal and rebirth, for in it there is a literal death and a resurrection effected by a divine power.<sup>18</sup> Eliot said of this play in Poetry and Drama that although he decided to use a Greek story as background, he was determined this would be "merely as a point of departure," and he felt he had concealed the myth so well that no one recognized it until he pointed it out. He stated, however, that those readers who were at first disturbed by the strange behaviour of the unidentified guest more fully understood him by realizing the relationship to Heracles in Euripides' play.<sup>19</sup> Harcourt-Reilly, as the modern Heracles, may be regarded as a priest-substitute, or a saviour, for he does effect the regeneration of Edward, Lavinia, and Celia.

This play illustrates Eliot's concern with ordinary people, and not simply with "saints," such as Thomas à Beckett. It is a play of serious spiritual quest that emphasizes that human life may be





more dynamic and more meaningful than people usually realize. And Edward, Lavinia, and Celia, in varying ways, find a more meaningful life.

Because he refuses to face reality, Edward is a victim of isolation. Harcourt-Reilly confronts him with this fact:

Who are you now?  
 You don't know any more than I do,  
 But rather less. You are nothing but a set  
 Of obsolete responses. The one thing to do  
 Is to do nothing. Wait.

Edward does come to realize that not only does he not know himself, but he does not know his wife:

And I must get her back, to find out what has happened  
 During the five years that we've been married.  
 I must find out who she is, to find out who I am.  
 And what is the use of all your analysis  
 If I am to remain always lost in the dark?

Later, his words to Celia indicate progression in insight, for he senses he must accept life as it is:

I see that my life was determined long ago  
 And that the struggle to escape from it  
 Is only a make-believe, a pretence  
 That what is, is not, or could be changed.

This decision indicates a new type of freedom, though he does not yet understand it:

Your moment of freedom was yesterday.  
 You made a decision. You set in motion  
 Forces in your life and in the lives of others  
 Which cannot be reversed. That is one consideration.  
 And another is this: it is a serious matter  
 To bring someone back from the dead.

It is Lavinia who will be brought "back from the dead," and Edward is instructed to "ask no questions and give no explanations," lest they "strangle each other with knotted memories." They are to begin anew.



When Lavinia returns, and she and Edward are alone, she asserts that she is "rather a different person." He replies, "But doesn't it occur to you that possibly / I may have changed too?" And though he has, he is still in a state of darkness; his "change" is simply in the fact that he is now aware of his condition: "I am simply in hell." Because of this new awareness, Edward wishes he could "return to yesterday," before he "made a decision." One is reminded of Prufrock, who finds himself utterly incapable of making a decision, for he fears what this may do to him: "Do I dare / Disturb the universe?" But unlike Prufrock, Edward moves forward.

In Harcourt-Reilly's office, Edward is obsessed with the seriousness of his own condition, and even tries to prescribe his own cure - a visit to the sanitorium. At this point in the play Lavinia enters the office, and before noting the significance of the "cure" prescribed for both, it is necessary to note the evidence earlier in the play of her unwillingness to face reality. Edward says of her:

Lavinia always had the ambition  
To establish herself in two worlds at once -  
But she herself had to be the link between them.

Of herself, after returning home, Lavinia says:

But it seems to me that yesterday  
I started some machine, that goes on working,  
And I cannot stop it; no, it's not like a machine -  
Or if it's a machine, someone else is running it.  
But who? Somebody is always interfering . . .  
I don't feel free . . . and yet I started it.

Her increasing insight is indicated when she says to Edward:





Well, I shall have to tell Julia the truth.  
 I shall always tell the truth now.  
 We have wasted such a lot of time in lying.

She claims she returned to Edward because "something, or somebody, compelled [her] to come," yet she does not understand why. She does explain, however, why she went away:

I thought that there might be some way out for you  
 If I went away. I thought that if I died  
 To you, I who had been only a ghost to you,  
 You might be able to find the road back  
 To a time when you were real - for you must have been real  
 At some time or other, before you ever knew me.

And these words suggest that even before leaving Lavinia had made some progress toward recovery.

In Harcourt-Reilly's office, both Edward and Lavinia are analyzed and shown the type of "cure" they must take:

My patients such as you are the self-deceivers  
 Taking infinite pains, exhausting their energy,  
 Yet never quite successful. You have both of you pretended  
 To be consulting me; both, tried to impose upon me  
 Your own diagnosis, and prescribe your own cure.  
 But when you put yourself into hands like mine  
 You surrender a great deal more than you meant to.  
 This is the consequence of trying to lie to me.

Edward finally admits he has never been in love with anyone but himself, and Lavinia admits she is possibly incapable of being loved. They have, in other words, "the same isolation." While Lavinia feels that what they have in common may simply make them "loathe one another," the doctor tells them to see it "rather as the bond which holds you together." They conclude, therefore, that they must "make the best of a bad job," and Reilly agrees:

The best of a bad job is all any of us can make of it  
 Except of course, the saints - such as those who go  
 To the sanatorium -



The principle here cited is similar to that in "The Dry Salvages" where Eliot says that "to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time, is an occupation for the saint - . . . . For most of us, there is only the unattended / Moment, the moment in and out of time, . . . . These are only hints and guesses, Hints followed by guesses"; yet the implication in The Cocktail Party, as in "The Dry Salvages," is that such hints, given to those who may not be saints, may lead to further illumination. And thus Harcourt-Reilly's parting words are fitting: "Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence." That Edward and Lavinia took this injunction seriously is indicated in their new attitude towards each other, and towards their lot in life, on the evening of another cocktail party, two years later. They can now face their world as it is.

Celia's path towards spiritual rebirth is vastly different. At the beginning of the play she is in love with Edward, though she admits she has no concrete hopes that they will have a life together. Yet when she learns Lavinia has gone, she suddenly finds

That the dream was not enough; that I wanted something more  
And I waited, and wanted to run to tell you.  
Perhaps the dream was better. It seemed the real reality,  
And if this is reality, it is very like a dream.

After Edward's decision to take Lavinia back, Celia senses the change in him:

Twice you have changed since I have been looking at you.  
I looked at your face: and I thought that I knew  
And loved every contour; and as I looked  
It withered, as if I had unwrapped a mummy.  
I listened to your voice ; that had always thrilled me,  
And it became another voice - no, not a voice:  
What I heard was only the voice of an insect,  
Dry, endless, meaningless, inhuman -





Celia indicates insight through this description, for it is at the point where Edward has made a decision, but does not know where it may lead him, and he wishes he could "return to yesterday." It is the period of darkness preceding illumination, and this is revealed in his appearance. When Celia sees Edward the next day, her attitude is more perceptive still:

I'm not really laughing at you, Edward.  
 I couldn't have laughed at anything, yesterday;  
 But I've learnt a lot in twenty-four hours.  
 It wasn't a very pleasant experience.  
 Oh, I'm glad I came!  
 I can see you at last as a human being.  
 Can't you see me that way too, and laugh about it?

And she decides, as does Peter, to go away, though she does not know where.

Celia's attitude in Harcourt-Reilly's office is the opposite of that of Edward and Lavinia:

Well, I can't pretend that my trouble is interesting;  
 But I shan't begin that way. I feel perfectly well.  
 I could lead an active life - if there's anything to work for;  
 I don't imagine that I am being persecuted;  
 I don't hear any voices, I have no delusions -  
 Except that the world I live in seems all a delusion!

She admits that there are two things she cannot understand, and these are "An awareness of solitude" and "a sense of sin." She is mystified by these thoughts, yet "frightened by the fear / That it is more real than anything I believed in." And she feels she must atone: "Can you treat a patient for such a state of mind?"

The fact that Celia is already on the road to recovery is indicated by her deepened insight into Edward: "he is only a child /



Lost in a forest, wanting to go home." Reilly tells her this compassion indicates the type of cure she will find effective for herself, yet says "the form of treatment must be your own choice: I cannot choose for you." He explains the two possible ways - the one similar to that prescribed for Edward and Lavinia: "I can reconcile you to the human condition"; and the other ("if you have the courage") "unknown," and thus requiring faith - "The kind of faith that issues from despair":

The destination cannot be described  
 You will know very little until you get there;  
 You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession  
 Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.

It is significant that whereas Edward and Lavinia were given no choice in the matter of their "cure," Celia is, for her spiritual perception makes this possible. Furthermore, no one can force another to choose the way that "is a terrifying journey," and "a lonely way." Reilly says of the two ways:

But those who take the other  
 Can forget their loneliness. You will not forget yours.  
 Each way means loneliness - and communion.  
 Both ways avoid the final desolation  
 Of solitude in the phantasmal world  
 Of imagination, shuffling memories and desires.

Celia is told she will not come back from the "sanatorium" the same as she went, and his parting words, "Go in peace, my daughter, / Work out your salvation with diligence," are almost identical to those spoken to Edward and Lavinia, and thus convey a similar religious tone.

Celia's "cure" takes her to work among natives in Kinkanja,





where she is crucified near an ant-hill. When her friends learn this horrifying news, only Harcourt-Reilly is undisturbed. He tries to explain why:

For know there are two worlds of life and death:  
 One that which thou beholdest; but the other  
 Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit  
 The shadows of all forms that think and live  
 Till death unite them and they part no more!  
 . . . . .  
 it was for her to choose the way of life  
 To lead to death, and, without knowing the end  
 Yet choose the form of death. We know the death she chose.  
 I did not know that she would die in this way;  
She did not know. So all that I could do  
 Was to direct her in the way of preparation.  
 That way, which she accepted, led to this death.  
 And if that is not a happy death, what death is happy.  
 . . . . .  
 You think her life was wasted. It was triumphant.

To Edward and Lavinia, who feel a sense of guilt at Celia's death, Harcourt-Reilly says:

You will have to live with these memories and make them  
 Into something new. Only by acceptance  
 Of the past will you alter its meaning.

Celia is like Harry in The Family Reunion, for both are overwhelmed by a sense of sin and solitude, and both have a kind of vision which leads them to see that those who were objects of their love were merely substitutes for inner longings which must take them beyond ordinary mortal experience.<sup>20</sup> Celia's momentary vision: "You see, I think I really had a vision of something / Though I don't know what it is" is analogous to a rose-garden experience, for she for a moment apprehended the timeless: "I don't want to forget it. I want to live with it. I could do without everything. Put up with anything, if I might cherish it."



Eliot shows in The Cocktail Party that both the way suggested to the Chamberlaynes, and that chosen by Celia, are ways out of darkness and into redemption: Edward and Lavinia found their way to a true and realistic humanity, and Celia to divinity. The latter way is not for all, and the play emphasizes therefore that there is a way of salvation for everyone, and both ways are equally acceptable.<sup>21</sup> It is possible to describe these two ways as the Affirmative and Negative Ways, allusions to St. John of the Cross, and also to Dante. Eliot's friend Charles Williams describes these ways as sanctioned by the ancient church:<sup>22</sup>

Both methods, the Affirmative Way and the Negative Way, were to co-exist; one might almost say, to coinhere, since each was to be the key of the other. . . . The Communion of the Eucharist, at once an image and a Presence, was common and necessary to both; The one Way was to affirm all things orderly until the universe throbbed with vitality; the other to reject all things until there was nothing anywhere but He. The Way of Affirmation was to develop great art and romantic love and marriage and philosophy and social justice; the Way of Rejection was to break out continually in the profound mystical documents of the soul, the records of the great psychological masters of Christendom.

In The Cocktail Party Eliot shows the Chamberlaynes finding the Affirmative Way, and Celia the Negative. Both are equally effective paths to personal regeneration.

The Confidential Clerk is a much less mystical play than the former ones, and therefore a little more difficult to fit into Eliot's "death and rebirth" scheme. It is not a play about death but about living life fully, and through this the positive side of regeneration is most evident: "It reflects faintly the tension of affirmative and negative impulses as in mystical theology, inasmuch





as it shows the young man rejecting the affection of human beings in favor of the life through which he may be closest to God. But if his rejection is negative in pattern, his turning towards his music is emphatically affirmative, even though he has chosen a life of service, not of mysticism through art."<sup>23</sup> The play, then, does not emphasize the matter of expiation of guilt, or atonement, but rather suggests the idea that if one seeks "happiness through vocation" this will be doing God's will, and one's vocation is whatever one really wants to do: "It must, moreover, be an activity, and thus it is at once limited, defined, and fulfilled by one's relations with other people or with God. Only by self-knowledge can one elect it; and self-knowledge depends on communication with others and the understanding of them."<sup>24</sup>

Although on the surface this play is a farce, Eliot's intention is serious. In reply to an interview question asking why he had written it as a comedy, Eliot replied: "If you want to say something serious nowadays, it's easier to say it in comedy than in tragedy. People take tragedy seriously on the surface. They take comedy lightly on the surface but seriously underneath."<sup>25</sup> In comparison with The Cocktail Party, the problems, and the answers, are indistinct in this play, for there is no well-defined conflict, but rather the crises arise out of general conditions of anxiety. The central crisis, of course, which indicates the regeneration theme, is the process of Colby discovering who he is. Most of the other characters, with the exception of Eggerson and



Mrs. Guzzard, are involved in a search for identity also, but Colby's is central and represents that of the others.<sup>26</sup> He may, to some extent at least, be likened in his final decision to Harry and Celia, though reality for each is found in something different.

One of the first characteristics of Colby Simpkins that is referred to is his love for music and his ambition to be an organist. But he has been sidetracked into being "confidential clerk" to Sir Claude Mulhammer, his father. When the mistaken identity plot begins to work, Colby comes to the point of crisis, where he must know who he is. The progression in his thinking begins following the arrival of Lady Elizabeth, when Colby and Sir Claude discuss his position in the household. Colby says,

I must confess, that up to this point  
I haven't been able to feel very settled.  
And what you've had in mind still seems to me  
Like building my life upon a deception.

Sir Claude rationalizes, explaining that his wife "has always lived in a world of make-believe," and therefore all they can do is "guide her delusions / In the right direction." Colby replies:

I doesn't seem quite honest  
If we all have to live in a world of make-believe  
Is that good for us?

Sir Claude states his position, into which he is trying to guide Colby, by saying, "If you haven't the strength to impose your own terms / Upon life, you must accept the terms it offers you." Still Colby says he is "not at all sure that I like the other person / That I feel myself becoming." This remark leads to Sir Claude's recounting of his own experience, and his desire to be a potter.





To him, these objects he moulds "are life itself." Yet he gave up his chosen vocation because of family pressure:

I loathed this occupation  
Until I began to feel my power in it.  
The life changed me, as it is changing you:  
It begins as a kind of make-believe  
And the make-believing makes it real.

This statement embodies his advice to Colby, for he sees a further similarity between their positions in the fact that even as he knew he should never have become a first-rate potter, Colby would probably not become a first-rate musician. Yet his music would give him an outlet into reality:

And when you are alone at your piano, in the evening,  
I believe you will go through the private door  
Into the real world, as I do, sometimes.

Sir Claude says of his art that it sometimes provides him with "an agonising ecstasy / Which makes life bearable. It's all I have./ I suppose it takes the place of religion." Sir Claude, apparently, has rejected the idea of living an "abundant life" and has concluded he must be content with occasional excursions into the real world. This, however, does not satisfy Colby.

Although he has gained an understanding of Sir Claude's nature, Colby feels that "something in [him] / Rebels against accepting such conditions." And in the second act, where he plays for Lucasta, Colby experiences a sensation analogous to the "rose-garden" experience. Lucasta tells him that because of his music he has a "secret garden" to which he can go and lock the gate behind him, whereas her only garden is "a dirty public square":



I've no garden.  
 I hardly feel that I'm even a person:  
 Nothing but a bit of living matter.

Colby insists that "there is a garden somewhere" for her, simply because she wants one so much. They talk of Eggerson's literal garden, which is perhaps more real because he doesn't feel alone there, and because it has a practical purpose. Eggerson's garden is part of "one single world" whereas Colby's garden is "no less unreal" to him than the outside world; he has two worlds which have nothing to do with each other. His desire, now expressed explicitly, is that he not be alone there: "If I were religious, God would walk in my garden / And that would make the world outside it real / And acceptable, I think." As it is, he has no one. During this visit, however, these two come to a partial understanding of each other, and both admit to being inwardly changed. But at this point the discussion leads to Lucasta's disclosure of her identity, Colby's dismay, and the resultant misunderstanding.

Lady Elizabeth's idea that Colby must be her lost son is the specific point at which Colby decides he must know whose son he is. On the one hand he does not care if he is her son or Sir Claude's, yet says that now "I wish that I could have had a father and a mother." After Mrs. Guzzard's story reveals B. Kaghan as Elizabeth's son, Colby says:

I wished to know the truth.  
 What it is, doesn't matter. All I wanted was relief  
 From the nagging annoyance of knowing there's a fact  
 That one doesn't know. But the fact itself  
 Is unimportant, once one knows it.





Yet he goes on to say he would like as a father "An ordinary man / Whose life I could in some way perpetuate / By being the person he would have liked to be, / And by doing the things he had wanted to do." Furthermore, he would prefer to be the son of "A dead obscure man" rather than of Sir Claude. And at this point Mrs. Guzzard tells the story about Colby's birth; this gives him freedom to follow his chosen vocation and become an organist. It is interesting that Eggerson, whom Eliot calls "the only developed Christian in the play," is the one who becomes a spiritual father to Colby, taking him into his home, providing him with a job as church organist, and predicting he will eventually enter the ministry.<sup>27</sup> This detail in the play gives Colby's "renewal" a distinctly Christian flavour that is significant in view of his earlier statement that he was not religious. He has not only found himself, but has found that God may be "in [his] garden," and make "the world outside it real."

Eliot's source for The Confidential Clerk is Euripides' Ion, and a recognition of this aids in an understanding of the Christian implications. The Ion also is the story of a misplaced child, and conflicting parental claims upon him. As the son of Apollo and a mortal princess, he symbolizes the union of humanity and divinity. When his mother tries to kill the child, his divine father rescues him, and years later when the mother and her husband plead to the gods for a child, Apollo arranges to have Ion reunited with them in order that he may claim his birthright of the kingdom of Athens.



In the ensuing misunderstandings and strange events, Ion finally demands the truth and his parentage and inheritance are confirmed. Colby, in the same way, has a "divine" heritage in his musical ability and aptitude, and a "human" in his apparent relationship to Sir Claude. Colby must reject the wrong ways to reality, and find meaning in life through an understanding of his own nature and his own way to the "abundant life."<sup>28</sup>

In The Elder Statesman Eliot portrays yet another fugitive from reality in the person of Lord Claverton. One of the "ghosts" from this man's past aptly points out to him the nature of his failure:<sup>29</sup>

The worst kind of failure, in my opinion,  
Is the man who has to keep pretending to himself  
That he's a success - the man who in the morning  
Has to make up his face before he looks in the mirror.

The play is not unlike Murder in the Cathedral in the sense that a man approaching death spends time reviewing his past life and endeavoring to find "spiritual wholeness."<sup>30</sup> Though this play does not state an explicit formula, Claverton does find a spiritual rebirth in discovering "a higher pattern in what seemed a wholly secular life."<sup>31</sup> One does receive the impression that to some extent each man achieves his own salvation, and that this is done through the medium of love which is the manifestation of the Divine on earth.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, it is reminiscent of "Marina" where there is a joyous affirmation of the "grace transmitted through human love."<sup>33</sup>





Eliot's choice of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus as his source suggests that this play may be taken as the "final resolution of his theme of spiritual quest." When asked in an interview about the source for The Elder Statesman, Eliot said:

The play in the background is the Oedipus at Colonus. But I wouldn't like to refer to my Greek originals as models. I have always regarded them more as points of departure. That was one of the weaknesses of The Family Reunion; it was rather too close to the Eumenides. I tried to follow my original too literally and in that way led to confusion by mixing pre-Christian and post-Christian attitudes about matters of conscience and sin and guilt.

So in the subsequent three I have tried to take the Greek myth as a sort of springboard, you see. After all, what one gets essential and permanent, I think, in the old plays, is a situation.<sup>34</sup>

In Eliot's play Lord Claverton re-enacts the final purgation of the aged Oedipus who is purified and blessed by the gods before he dies. Both have been blind to their guilt, and have lived in spiritual darkness, and even as Oedipus is aided by Antigone, so Lord Claverton is supported and finally cured by Monica's love. Use of this source, therefore, enables Eliot to emphasize a more positive side of the ritual symbolism than in his other plays.<sup>35</sup> Unlike The Cocktail Party, only the Affirmative Way to salvation is presented here.

Lord Claverton's need of regeneration is suggested early in the play by Monica's statement about "his terror of being alone," "his fear of being exposed to strangers," and the fact that he is "much iller than he is aware of." It is further illuminated by the visit of Gomez, who so accurately diagnoses Claverton's inability to accept himself as he really is. Even when Gomez does review their relationship of many years before, Claverton tries to free himself from any moral responsibility for Gomez' life of crime:



But how was I responsible?  
 We were the same age. You were a free moral agent.  
 You pretend that I taught you expensive tastes:  
 If you had not had those tastes already  
 You would hardly have welcomed my companionship.

Yet the visit is disturbing, as Gomez implies when he says:

You'll come to feel easier when I'm with you  
 Than when I'm out of sight. You'll be afraid of whispers  
 The reflection in the mirror of the face behind you,  
 The ambiguous smile, the distant salutation,  
 The sudden silence when you enter the smoking room.

Next, Claverton meets Mrs. Carghill, another ghost from his  
 past, who reminds him of an additional occasion when he ran away  
 rather than face up to his responsibility:

You got out of a tangle for a large cash payment  
 And no publicity. So your conscience was clear.  
 At bottom, I believe you're still the same silly Richard  
 You always were. You wanted to pose  
 As a man of the world. And now you're posing  
 As what? I presume, as an elder statesman;  
 And the difference between being an elder statesman  
 And posing successfully as an elder statesman  
 Is practically negligible. And you look the part.  
 Whatever part you've played, I must say you've always looked it.

Claverton's regeneration experience involves first an acceptance of  
 these accusations about his own character, and his words to Michael  
 reveal that he has progressed this far:

Those who flee from their past will always lose the race.  
 I know this from experience. When you reach your goal,  
 Your imagined paradise of success and grandeur,  
 You will find your past failures waiting there to greet you.

Later, he says to Monica:

What I want to escape from  
 Is myself, is the past. But what a coward I am,  
 To talk of escaping! And what a hypocrite!  
 . . . . .  
 Come, I'll start to learn again  
 Michael and I shall go to school together. . . .  
 But have I still time?  
 There is time for Michael. Is it too late for me, Monica?





A further level of spiritual development is indicated in Claverton's words to Charles and Monica about his past, and about the need in every human life for love:

If a man has one person, just one in his life,  
To whom he is willing to confess everything -  
And that includes, mind you, not only things criminal,  
Not only turpitude, meanness and cowardice,  
But also situations which are simply ridiculous,  
When he has played the fool. . . -  
Then he loves that person, and his love will save him.

Of the two individuals from his past who have come back to haunt him, he says:

They are merely ghosts  
Spectres from my past. They've always been with me  
Though it was not till lately that I found the living persons  
Whose ghosts tormented me, to be only human beings,  
Malicious, petty, and I see myself emerging  
From my spectral existence into something like reality.  
. . . . .  
Each of them remembers an occasion  
On which I ran away. Very well.  
I shan't run away now - run away from them.  
It is through this meeting that I shall at last escape them.

In facing his "ghosts" Claverton is indeed taking a step toward freedom, even as Harry (The Family Reunion) did when he faced the Eumenides. He knows, furthermore, that by making this decision he is not suffering from a morbid conscience but rather is recovering from a serious illness. When he promises never to repudiate Michael, in spite of his disapproval of Michael's life and intended association with Gomez, he has achieved another victory. Finally, he can say:

I feel at peace now  
It is the peace that ensues upon contrition  
When contrition ensues upon knowledge of the truth.  
. . . . .  
I've only just now had the illumination  
Of knowing what love is.  
. . . . .  
I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone;  
And in becoming no one, I begin to live.  
It is worth while dying, to find out what life is.



Charles sums up the change in Claverton as follows:

He's a very different man from the man he used to be.  
It's as if he had passed through some door unseen by us  
And had turned and was looking back at us  
With a glance of farewell.

By this passage the reader is reminded of the other doors in Eliot's works - the doors into the rose-garden of spiritual illumination, after which no man is the same. Monica sums up her father's experience by saying, "In becoming no one, he has become himself." His regeneration is complete.

The action of the play concludes, fittingly, as it began, with a love scene between Monica and Charles, in which they discuss the knowledge and meaning of Claverton's experience, and his death. Their happiness, they know, is because "The dead has poured out a blessing on the living." Claverton's regeneration is reflected in them, for their love has made them a new person, "who is you and me together,"<sup>35</sup> and they can go through life "Fixed in the certainty of love unchanging."

The drama of T. S. Eliot combines in an effective manner both the negative and positive aspects of regeneration. The need and possibility of regeneration is portrayed by the generalized picture in The Rock, by the women and the priests in Murder in the Cathedral, and finally, in the four plays with a contemporary setting, through specific characters who suffer from an acute sense of isolation. The remedy for this condition is shown to be not only a realistic acceptance of life, but an acknowledgement of its spiritual dimension. This is, of course, an explicit emphasis in The Rock and Murder in the Cathedral, but is implicit in the themes of the other plays as





well. For each individual discussed finds, as indicated, a way to open "the private door / Into the real world." And, like Lord Claverton, each finds "the peace that ensues upon contrition / When contrition ensues upon knowledge of the truth."



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The preceding examination of T. S. Eliot's poetry and plays in the light of his personal religious position demonstrates that the concept of Christian regeneration is a unifying theme in his work. Yet it is essential to realize the fact that Eliot did not produce his poetry and plays as propaganda. R. P. Blackmur sums up Eliot's accomplishment as follows:

What a relief to read a man who never cheats on poetry, who insists on the gift and the genuine, but who is to this extent not fooled: He knows that poetry is only a part of the enterprise. He knows that poetry saves nobody, but shows rather the actual world from which to be saved or not, and shows also what has been made actual, what has been actually felt, of aspiration.<sup>1</sup> A living language, for Eliot, has to do with a living religion.

Eliot's poetry and plays surely do portray "what has been actually felt," and demonstrate his critical viewpoint that a writer's beliefs will affect what he writes, even though the specific philosophy in the art may at times vary from his personal convictions. In the same way, a reader may enjoy a poem or a play without adhering to the ideas presented in it, though he cannot completely ignore those ideas. Art and belief, therefore, in Eliot's mind, can never be completely separated.

Eliot's early poems fit into the Christian context because they portray the universal need for redemption. Furthermore, there are, throughout these poems, allusions and symbols that suggest new life for the inhabitants of the "wasteland" of modern society. I do not, therefore, agree with critics who find no indication of hope





in the early poetry, and in this paper I have tried to isolate specific examples in each poem discussed to demonstrate my position.

With "Ash Wednesday," Eliot begins to allude to Christianity in a more explicit manner, and to portray the positive aspect of the redemption theme. In this poem he has concentrated on purgation and penitence, whereas in the Ariel Poems the death and rebirth experience is indicated symbolically. Four Quartets, the most philosophical and complex of Eliot's poems, suggests regeneration primarily through mystical language, and alludes not only to Christian doctrine but to oriental religions, thus giving the work a desirable universality. However, the use of Christian symbols for the Holy Spirit, and explicit references to one unique Incarnation and to the Atonement, imply that the basic orientation is Christian.

Both the negative and positive aspects of regeneration are stressed in Eliot's plays. The Rock and Murder in the Cathedral have direct Christian themes, and both show, in different ways, not only "a world confused and dark and disturbed by portents of fear," but also that "the darkness declares the glory of light." The four plays that have a contemporary setting avoid religious terms and rely on a generalized redemption pattern: individuals who are suffering from an acute sense of isolation search for, and find, the ability to accept life realistically and in so doing acknowledge its spiritual dimension. They illustrate the fact that in Eliot's work there is not so much a distinction between suffering and joy, but between two types of suffering, the passive and the active: "He sees the choice for civilized man as between the pain of spiritual stagnation and



psychic sterility or the pain of the willing surrender to purgation, to the heavy toil of spiritual rebirth and growth."<sup>2</sup> The painful process of rebirth does, however, bring its own joy: Harry, though uncertain where his "pilgrimage / Of expiation" will lead, knows it will be "Somewhere on the other side of despair"; Edward discovers that "every moment is a fresh beginning"; Colby, in abandoning his "illusions and ambitions," finds "All that's left is love"; and Lord Claverton, after facing the ghosts from his past, says, "And now I feel happy." And these statements sum up precisely the basic meaning regeneration had for Eliot throughout his career: deliverance from a state of spiritual death and rebirth to an "abundant life."





FOOTNOTES

Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Brooks, in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, 316.

<sup>2</sup>Cross, ed., 1144.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1144.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 684.

<sup>5</sup>Härdelin, 76.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>7</sup>Schillebeeckx, 225-226.

<sup>8</sup>Tate, 390.

<sup>9</sup>Raine, in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work, 79.

<sup>10</sup>Eliot, Selected Prose, 166.

<sup>11</sup>Eliot, After Strange Gods, 43.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 57.

<sup>13</sup>Smidt, 29.

<sup>14</sup>Bergsten, 49.

<sup>15</sup>Eliot, Knowledge and Experience, 11.

<sup>16</sup>Brett, "Mysticism and Incarnation in Four Quartets," 95.

<sup>17</sup>Smidt, 32.

<sup>18</sup>G. Smith, 4.

<sup>19</sup>Brett, "Mysticism and Incarnation in Four Quartets," 96,98.

<sup>20</sup>Fowlie, in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot, 312,314.

<sup>21</sup>Smidt, 421,422,427,429.

<sup>22</sup>Hulme, 71.



- 23Maxwell, 163.
- 24Eliot, Selected Essays, 473.
- 25Ibid., 490-491.
- 26Eliot, in Baillie and Martin, eds., Revelation, 16, 21.
- 27Power, 124.
- 28Eliot, "What Does the Church Stand For?", 560.
- 29Eliot, in Baillie and Martin, eds., Revelation, 1-2.
- 30Ibid., 34, 35, 39.
- 31Jones, 123. Quoted from J. P. Hodin, 'The Condition of Man Today. An Interview with T. S. Eliot,' Horizon, XII, No. 68 (August, 1945), 88.
- 32Eliot, "The Church's Message to the World," 289, 291.
- 33Spender, in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot, 59.
- 34Bergsten, 69-70.
- 35Eliot, Selected Prose, 146, 147, 154.
- 36Eliot, Selected Essays, 511.
- 37Ibid., 515.
- 38Eliot, To Criticize the Critic, 15.
- 39Cahill, 210.
- 40Winters, in L. Unger, ed., T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique, 113.
- 41Spender, in L. Unger, ed., T. S. Eliot, 273-274.
- 42Wilson, 126.
- 43Matthiessen, 98-100.
- 44Gardner, 104.
- 45Eliot, Christianity and Culture, 26.
- 46Ibid., 105-106.





- <sup>47</sup>Weston, 34,36.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., 163.
- <sup>49</sup>Frazer, 376-443.
- <sup>50</sup>Cahill, ix.
- <sup>51</sup>Thompson, 78.
- <sup>52</sup>Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," 483.
- <sup>53</sup>Thompson, 79.
- <sup>54</sup>Cahill, 182.
- <sup>55</sup>Gangulee, ed., 13.
- <sup>56</sup>Smidt, 178.
- <sup>57</sup>Eliot, Collected Poems., 176,177.
- <sup>58</sup>Bergsten, 74.
- <sup>59</sup>Matthiessen, 108.
- <sup>60</sup>Drew, 248.
- <sup>61</sup>Blackmur, in L. Unger, ed., T. S. Eliot, 239.
- <sup>62</sup>Matthiessen, 97, 108-109.
- <sup>63</sup>Eliot, The Sacred Wood, 56.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., 160,162.
- <sup>65</sup>Eliot, Selected Prose, 53.
- <sup>66</sup>Eliot, Selected Essays, 127.
- <sup>67</sup>Austin, 144. Quoted from "A Note on Poetry and Belief," Enemy, I (January, 1927), 16.
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., 144. Quoted from "Literature, Science, and Dogma," Dial, LXXXII (March, 1927), 241.
- <sup>69</sup>Eliot, Selected Essays, 269-271.
- <sup>70</sup>Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda," 103,106.



<sup>71</sup>Eliot, in G.W. Knight, Wheel of Fire, xv, xvi.

<sup>72</sup>Austin, 146. Quoted from The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London, 1933), 96.

<sup>73</sup>Eliot, Selected Essays, 388, 391, 399.

<sup>74</sup>Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, 6-7.

<sup>75</sup>Eliot, To Criticize the Critic, 14.

<sup>76</sup>Austin, 143.

<sup>77</sup>Smidt, 92.

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Smidt, 92.

<sup>2</sup>Wheelwright, in B. Rajan, T. S. Eliot, 97.

<sup>3</sup>Cahill, 3.

<sup>4</sup>Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, 126.

<sup>5</sup>G. Smith, 18.

<sup>6</sup>Drew, 56-57.

<sup>7</sup>Cahill, 11, 13.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 29.

<sup>9</sup>Unger, in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot, 207.

<sup>10</sup>B. Rajan, in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot, 37.

<sup>11</sup>G. Smith, 63.

<sup>12</sup>Williamson, 113.

<sup>13</sup>G. Smith, 65. In addition to the idea included in the text, Smith says as follows: ". . . the idea that he is waiting, though he cannot hope, for liberation seems to point to the Fisher King of the Grail Legend and hence to the fertility rituals of paganism. His blindness certainly has analogues in ritual and myth; besides the maiming of Attis, Adonis, and Osiris, it brings to mind the slaying of Balder, by the blind god. Whether that act typified the death of summer or the killing of the sun-god, it signified in every way a victory for darkness. Gerontion's blindness symbolizes both his fault and his punishment, which are





inseparable. He is thus, in the light of Frazer and The Waste Land, a figure in whom a mythological role has been revived; the sterility, personal to him on the sexual level, comes from spiritual failure."

<sup>14</sup>Vickery, "Gerontion," 105-106.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>18</sup>Cahill, 34.

<sup>19</sup>G. Smith, 39-40.

<sup>20</sup>Cahill, 35.

<sup>21</sup>G. Smith, 43.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>23</sup>Cahill, 34.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>26</sup>Matthiessen, 104.

<sup>27</sup>G. Smith, 117.

<sup>28</sup>Brooks, in Jay Martin, ed., A Collection of Critical Essays, 86.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>30</sup>Brett, "Mysticism and Incarnation," 99.

<sup>31</sup>Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," 483.

<sup>32</sup>O'Connor, 19-20.

<sup>33</sup>Frye, 66.

<sup>34</sup>Kenner, The Invisible Poet, 136-137.

<sup>35</sup>G. Smith, 72.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 74. "The memories of Tiresias as the Fisher King contain no more important event than his failure with the hyacinth girl. Whether she is the Lithuanian or not is immaterial. She is



the Grail-bearer, the maiden bringing love. As in the legends, he has met her in a place of water and flowers, the Hyacinth garden. The function of the Grail-bearer is dual: first, she directs the quester to the place of his initiation or blames him for his failure there; second, she appears in the castle and bears the Grail into the great hall. It is she whom, if his quest is completed, he marries; she would be in Frazer's terms the consort of the wounded and resurrected god, and she universally appears in proximity to the water symbol. At his meeting with the hyacinth girl in The Waste Land, Tiresias as the quester has omitted to ask the indispensable question of the Grail initiation. Evidently he has merely stood agape while she, bearing the sexual symbol - the spike-shaped blossoms representing the slain god Hyacinth of The Golden Bough - has awaited the word he cannot utter:"

<sup>37</sup>Smidt, 161.

<sup>38</sup>G. Smith, 76.

<sup>39</sup>Drew, 96.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>42</sup>Bergsten, 81.

<sup>43</sup>This quotation is taken from Dante's Inferno, Canto III.

<sup>44</sup>Drew, 100.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>47</sup>Brooks, in B. Rajan, T. S. Eliot, 17.

<sup>48</sup>Drew, 104.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>51</sup>Gardner, 95.

<sup>52</sup>Smith, 90.

<sup>53</sup>Cahill, 48-49.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>55</sup>Gardner, 96.





- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., 98.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., 90.
- <sup>58</sup>Cahill, 44.
- <sup>59</sup>G. Smith, 93.
- <sup>60</sup>Cahill, 50-51.
- <sup>61</sup>G. Smith, 95.
- <sup>62</sup>Rajan, in Jay Martin, ed., A Collection of Critical Essays, 49.
- <sup>63</sup>Rajan, in Allen Tate., ed., T. S. Eliot, 374.
- <sup>64</sup>Cahill, 52.
- <sup>65</sup>Linton, 149.
- <sup>66</sup>Wilder, 205.
- <sup>67</sup>Braybrooke, 20.
- <sup>68</sup>Gardner, 104-105.
- <sup>69</sup>Strothmann, 426-427.
- <sup>70</sup>Campbell, ed., 99.
- <sup>71</sup>Strothmann, 428. Quoted from St. John of the Cross, Works, I, 403.

### Chapter Three

- <sup>1</sup>Gardner, 100.
- <sup>2</sup>Jones, in B. Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 37.
- <sup>3</sup>Cahill, 87.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 85, 92.
- <sup>5</sup>Jones, in Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 39.
- <sup>6</sup>Martin, 100-101.
- <sup>7</sup>G. Smith, 141.
- <sup>8</sup>Jones, in B. Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 41.



- <sup>9</sup>Wooten, 105-107.
- <sup>10</sup>Martin, 107.
- <sup>11</sup>Gardner, 115-116.
- <sup>12</sup>Cahill, 95.
- <sup>13</sup>Martin, 117.
- <sup>14</sup>Dante, 592.
- <sup>15</sup>Martin, 116,118.
- <sup>16</sup>Note the following excerpt from "Dans le Restaurant":  
 'Les saules trempés, et des bourgeons sur les ronces-  
 C'est là, dans une averse, qu'on s'abrite.  
 J'avais sept ans, elle était plus petite.  
 Elle était toute mouillée, je lui ai donné des primevères'  
 Les taches de son gilet montent au chiffre de trente-huit.  
 'Je le chatouillais, pour la faire rire.  
 J'éprouvais un instant de puissance et de délire.'
- <sup>17</sup>Eliot, Selected Essays, 272-275.
- <sup>18</sup>Bergsten, 71.
- <sup>19</sup>Martin, 119.
- <sup>20</sup>Cahill, 105-106.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid, 102.
- <sup>22</sup>Dante, 354.
- <sup>23</sup>Cahill, 106-107.
- <sup>24</sup>Martin, 127.
- <sup>25</sup>Cahill, 108.
- <sup>26</sup>Dante, 358.
- <sup>27</sup>G. Smith, 149-150.
- <sup>28</sup>Jones, in Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 52.
- <sup>29</sup>Cahill, 110,113,114.
- <sup>30</sup>Jones, in Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 53.





- <sup>31</sup>Whitford, 17.
- <sup>32</sup>Cahill, 117-118.
- <sup>33</sup>Whitford, 17-18.
- <sup>34</sup>Cahill, 119-120.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., 123.
- <sup>36</sup>Whitford, 20.
- <sup>37</sup>Jones, in Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 55.
- <sup>38</sup>Cahill, 124.
- <sup>39</sup>Gardner, 122.
- <sup>40</sup>Matthiessen, 123.
- <sup>41</sup>Wright, 68.
- <sup>42</sup>G. Smith, 122.
- <sup>43</sup>Gardner, 125.
- <sup>44</sup>Cahill, 66.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., 68-70.
- <sup>46</sup>Gardner, 126.
- <sup>47</sup>Leavis, in H. Kenner, ed., T. S. Eliot, 112.
- <sup>48</sup>Cahill, 77, 79.
- <sup>49</sup>Barnes, 303.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., 297-304.
- <sup>51</sup>Maxwell, 154.
- <sup>52</sup>Cahill, 208-209.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., 210.
- <sup>54</sup>Gardner, 68.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., 184.
- <sup>56</sup>Brett, "Mysticism and Incarnation," 96-97.



- 57Rajan, 80.
- 58Bergsten, 77.
- 59Ibid., 79.
- 60Ibid., 81.
- 61Ibid., 81-84.
- 62Bergsten, 87. Quoted from p. 8 of W. R. Inge.
- 63Ibid., 89.
- 64Ibid., 89.
- 65Weitz, 56.
- 66Thompson, 99.
- 67Ibid., 100.
- 68Ibid., 100.
- 69Bergsten, 168. Reference to Glasenapp, H. von, Der Hinduismus, München, 1922, p. 140; The Mythology of All Races, ed. by L. H. Gray, Boston, 1916-32, Vol. VIII, p.105.
- 70Thompson, 100.
- 71Bergsten, 186.
- 72Cahill, 150.
- 73Bergsten, 190-192.
- 74Thompson, 132.
- 75Gardner, 164.
- 76Kligerman, 101.
- 77Bergsten, 206.
- 78Cahill, 163.
- 79Bodelsen, 75.
- 80Cahill, 163. Quoted from The Dark Night of the Soul, II,xvi,10.
- 81G. Smith, 276.





- <sup>82</sup>Kligerman, 112.
- <sup>83</sup>Whitford, 27.
- <sup>84</sup>Cahill, 170.
- <sup>85</sup>Bergsten, 220.
- <sup>86</sup>Bodelsen, 85.
- <sup>87</sup>Bodelsen, 85.
- <sup>88</sup>Bergsten, 221.
- <sup>89</sup>Gardner, 171-172.
- <sup>90</sup>Bergsten, 222.
- <sup>91</sup>Bergsten, 223.
- <sup>92</sup>Whitford, 28.
- <sup>93</sup>Bergsten, 224.
- <sup>94</sup>Cahill, 182.
- <sup>95</sup>Ibid., 182.
- <sup>96</sup>Ibid., 182.
- <sup>97</sup>Bergsten, 229.
- <sup>98</sup>Rajan, 89.
- <sup>99</sup>Brett, Reason and Imagination, 124.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., 124.
- <sup>101</sup>Whitford, 29.
- <sup>102</sup>Cahill, 213.
- <sup>103</sup>G. Smith, 287.
- <sup>104</sup>Bergsten, 236.
- <sup>105</sup>Cahill, 190.
- <sup>106</sup>Ibid., 197.
- <sup>107</sup>Eliot, Selected Essays, 255-256.
- <sup>108</sup>Cahill, 197.



<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 198. Quoted from Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love. Methuen, London, 1901, 56.

<sup>110</sup>Bergsten, 239.

<sup>111</sup>Gardner, 67.

<sup>112</sup>Blisset, 124.

<sup>113</sup>Matthiessen, 192.

<sup>114</sup>Bergsten, 241.

<sup>115</sup>Cahill, 207.

<sup>116</sup>Bergsten, 243.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>118</sup>Gardner, in B. Rajan, ed., T. S. Eliot, 77.

#### Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup>Hamalian, 104.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Smith, 85.

<sup>3</sup>G. Smith, 178.

<sup>4</sup>Martz, in L. Unger, ed., T. S. Eliot, 457.

<sup>5</sup>Wilder, 213-214.

<sup>6</sup>Jones, 210.

<sup>7</sup>Hamalian, 148.

<sup>8</sup>Gardner, 140.

<sup>9</sup>Barber, in L. Unger, T. S. Eliot, 415-416.

<sup>10</sup>Fraser, 214-215.

<sup>11</sup>C. H. Smith, 117.

<sup>12</sup>Barth, 133.

<sup>13</sup>Hamalian, 206, 209.

<sup>14</sup>Barber, in L. Unger, ed., T. S. Eliot, 416.

<sup>15</sup>Frye, 93.





<sup>16</sup>Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, 90-91.

<sup>17</sup>Gardner, 156.

<sup>18</sup>Heracles, a Divine power, brings Alcestis back from the dead.

<sup>19</sup>Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, 91.

<sup>20</sup>Hamalian, 252.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 235.

<sup>22</sup>C. H. Smith, 162. Quoted from Charles Williams, The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church (New York, 1956) 57-58.

<sup>23</sup>G. Smith, 237.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 236.

<sup>25</sup>C. H. Smith, 185.

<sup>26</sup>Matthews, 272-273.

<sup>27</sup>C. H. Smith, 204.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 206-208.

<sup>29</sup>Barth, 138.

<sup>30</sup>Jones, 183.

<sup>31</sup>Bergsten, 202.

<sup>32</sup>Jones, 190.

<sup>33</sup>G. Smith, 247.

<sup>34</sup>C. H. Smith, 228. Quoted from "The Art of Poetry.I: T. S. Eliot," an interview by Donald Hall, The Paris Review, No. 21, p.61.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 230.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 228.

## Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>Blackmur, in H. Kenner, ed., T. S. Eliot, 147-148.

<sup>2</sup>Drew, 52-53.



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